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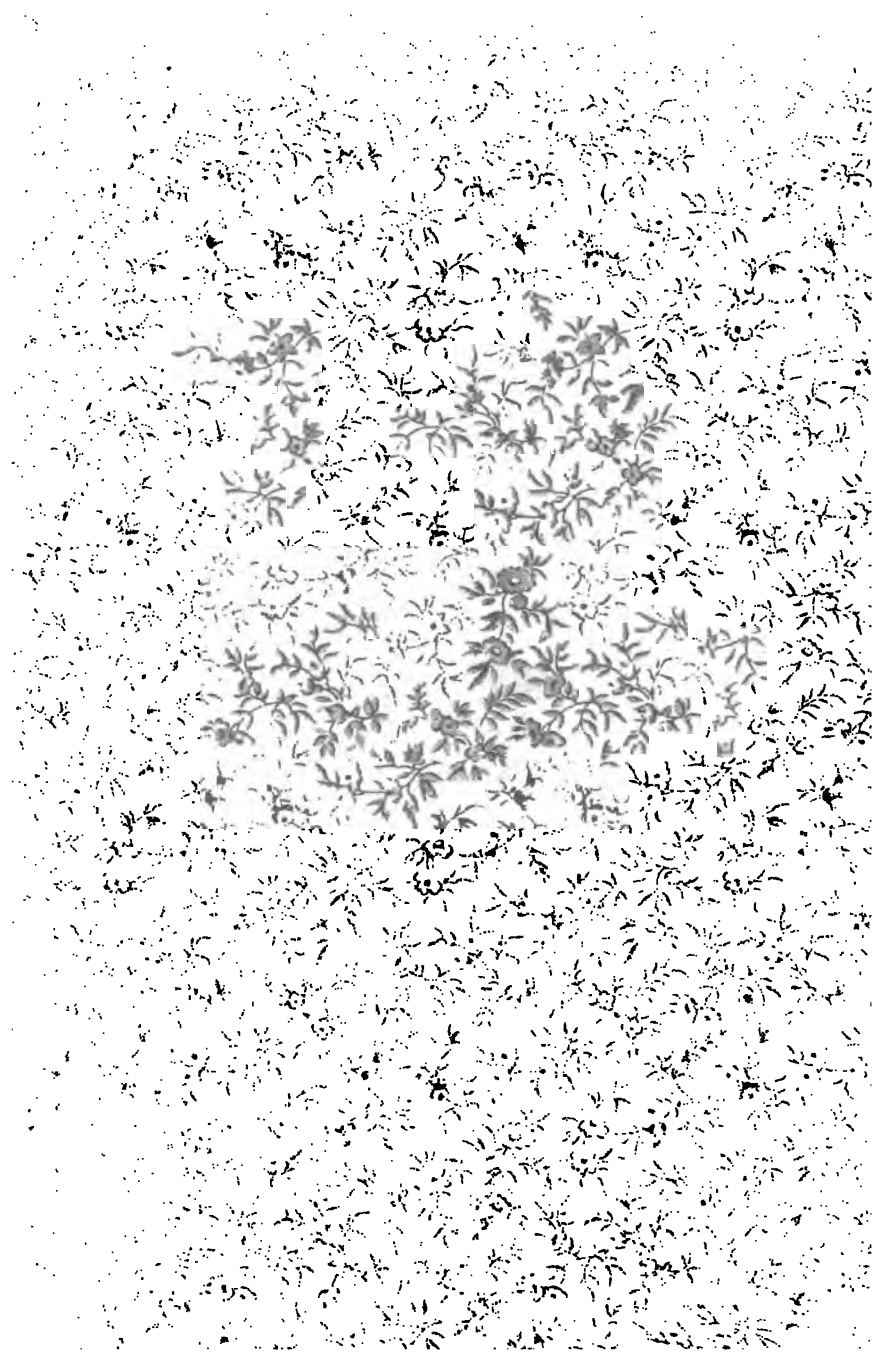
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THE GIFT OF
Prof. H. H. Bartlett





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P. M. F. N. Scott,
Compliments of the author,
Frederic Alva Dean
THE
HEROINES OF PÉTOSÉGA
A NOVEL

BY

FREDERIC ALVA DEAN



NEW YORK
THE HAWTHORNE PUBLISHING COMPANY

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PREFACE.

WITH instinctive reverence we unroll the scroll of hoary Time upon which are recorded the mystic traditions of the ages. With profound deference we approach the beatless heart of antiquity, whose powers have been so long silent, while our reverent fancy attempts to clothe again with life these ancient characters.

It is a kindred spirit that leads us to learn of those who played their parts in nations now decayed and lands forgotten.

The national habits, characteristics, and manners, the peculiarities of civilizations, the intelligence and ideals of peoples, all have a fascination for the student and thinker. The history of individual lives, in which we find their sufferings, their joys, their adversities, their achievements, their strength, and their weaknesses, touch most easily and naturally our sympathy and our deepest life. So, having found among the ancient archives such a story, the true and definite record of those who actually lived, it is with a special appreciation of good fortune that I begin this narrative.

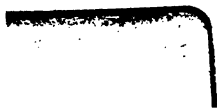
It is my pleasant lot to have discovered an ancient scrap of parchment containing the details of a thrilling romance, with a description of the mighty cataclysms of Nature.

If one should ask the source of this hoary tradition, I can only refer him to the Ancient of Days, a most mystical personage, who, being a seer of great age about to die, left me this wonderful legacy of heroism and devotion.

KEY TO THE NOVEL.

Time.—Thirty centuries ago.

Scene.—The then kingdom and city of PETOSÉGA, including the island of EFFELDA. The former is now a pretty summer town at the upper portion of the lower peninsula of Michigan, called Petoskey. The latter is the famous Mackinac Island, the Acropolis of the North, overlooking the three northern seas, lakes Huron, Michigan, and Superior. The scene then changes to Zoatia, a powerful nation in the Mosetta sea, now called the South Pacific, and ends in heroic Athens.



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PROLOGUE.

TIRELESSLY the deep-voiced ocean rolls its crystal waves high over the marble-terraced shore of the ancient city of Petoséga. Far back this city was a metropolis of brilliant magnificence ; now it is but the burial place of a once heroic and mighty race. Tradition can only point out its old location, for the dust of almost countless centuries has totally erased both its grandeur and beauty. The gray-peaked pyramids and the mystic-eyed sphinx were contemporaneous with the city of our narrative.

How the piles and monuments of human handiwork change and topple down, and how finally immutable and triumphant are the powers of Nature.

How a proud and magnificent forest towers loftily, in stateliness and beauty, over the ruins. The sturdy oak kisses the clouds, and its roots sink deep into the remains of palaces, coliseums, and towers. The majestic pines, robed in northern moss, where the harsh winds play through their boughs, seem the sad mementos of the past. The whole forest sways with the disconsolate wails of the wind. The owl's mournful cry is heard at eve, and the melancholy notes of the night-hawk sadden the twilight. The time-worn rocky caverns resound with the dash of the waves, and the reverberations die away in the shrill tones of the sea-mew's plaint.

Such is the desolate, forgotten city, but where are its

proud and imperial inhabitants ? Where are the brilliant minds, the noble hearts that shaped the destiny of their time, and stood the finest specimens of developed life ? Where is the cultured metropolis, the golden-domed city, the seat of learning, of beauty, of wealth ? Fallen are those great cathedrals, those gilded palace-halls ; gone are her monuments, her temples ; waste are her ports and thoroughfares, and her people forever departed. Scattered like the down of the thistle before the winds of the heavens, or the autumnal leaves in the blast of November. The mass of her people mouldered in the dust with her ruins ; many more died friendless and exiled on foreign shores, while others went down in numberless wrecks in the merciless seas. Little now remains on record of this glorious city and illustrious people, except this legend.

THE HEROINES OF PETOSÉGA.

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

THE DREAD PROPHECY.

“Ho, my Algos, does Aurora’s earliest light find thee thus strolling? This is indeed a high honor thou dost pay to the exquisite scenes of our beautiful city. How sweet seem the fresh-blown roses that have for the first time bathed their faces in the morning dew! What delightful fragrance, too, our grove of Calla throws out upon the soft morning air!”

Lostos, a lover of nature, had run on for some time in this enthusiastic strain over the beauties before them, and had not perceived the depressed state of his friend’s mind. He now asked :

“What means this brooding darkness, my Algos? Surely no misfortune has happened to thee of late? I pray the gods, and our most revered Etis, that no unhappy fate has visited thee since last we met. Prythee, unbosom to me thy trouble.”

“My dear Lostos, thy tender friendship has ever been a source of strength and delight to me. I feel thy

solicitude for myself and household, but a disaster to our beloved city may overwhelm us all."

"I pray thee be consoled," said Lostos, "it is nearly two decades since our civil war ended," supposing his friend referred to the fierce intestine conflict—of which there had been many—years before the present government was established. "All our people feel the utmost confidence, and the various factions have been moulded into one party for the public good."

"O, blessed were our city, if the foundations on which it stands were as permanent as her laws and customs laid down by the ancient Armutus. But doomed, I fear, is her imperial splendor. I pray there may be no truth in my foreboding. But, dear Lostos, scarce has sleep touched my eyes since late yesterday when, poring over some old musty parchments in my library, I came across a yellow manuscript hidden away in a little unused alcove for many years. Now that it is in my hands again, I have read it with sad apprehension, for it is a history, rather fragmentary to be sure, of the terrible destruction our city underwent in ages past, by the whirling, revolving monster called the Floating Mountain. Dost thou not recall this old tradition, my dear Lostos?"

"Aye, my Algos, I do remind me of this myth, for so I consider it to be ; yet perhaps because I would have it so. Still, sometimes when I have thought of it most, it has brought me pain and anxiety of soul. My misgivings come when I look up yonder along that beautiful mountain range, and see upon its crest the unrivalled Calla, and feel that if the traditions be true, that paragon of beauty is but the remains, the resting place of the spent force of the awful Floating Mountain, when, after its vast destruction of human glory, it rested as if in peace.

When this is fresh in my mind, I scarce dare cast my eyes thither."

"Aye, my Lostos, the parchment makes mention of the action of the terrible foe, and how it left the city; and it declares, as you have said, that it ceased in yonder pile which is now the cynosure of all eyes of the North. But may our patron goddess avert the terrible repetition. Whither goest thou, Lostos?"

"I was only out in the gray morning, rambling and breathing the pure, exhilarating air."

"Let us go to the temple of Etis, and propitiate her for the safety of our beloved native city."

"Aye, the noble thing, my Algos," said Lostos, and they repaired to the shrine of the goddess. Etis was the great tutelary divinity of the Petoségans. She was believed to personify all the qualities of virtue, truth, and love. She was beloved by her people, as was Athene by her darling Athens.

Thus conversing as they walked, the two young men had left the foot of the Calla range, which stretched along the south side of the city, and had passed down one of the long streets and stood before the magnificent temple of Etis.

Algos and Lostos were fine specimens of a cultured and refined race, having many characteristics indicating their Grecian origin. The order of their intellect was high; their physical features in fine harmony with their spiritual and mental acquirements. The Petoségans took the greatest pride in symmetry of mind and body. Their tastes as a people have never been equalled except by the ancient Greeks. They had the highest apprehension of Nature's beauties, her grandeur and sublimity, and knew the relation of the human soul to her deepest

mysteries. They approached the Greeks in their best qualities, and perhaps were superior to them in other respects. Their national type was the height of five feet six inches, very sinewy and symmetrical, showing ages of culture and training. The shoulders had a dignified roundness that gave to the whole figure the effect of perfect beauty. The features of both men and women were full and oval in form, with flaxen hair and blue eyes.

Lostos and Algos were clothed in the national style or system of dress. The Petoségans delighted in the rich colors of nature, and carried this love of color into their dress. They wore elaborate tunics, approaching closely the Attic in style. But the clasps which fastened them were of the same material, but of deeper dye; the sleeves were not flowing, like the Greeks, but, though loose until they reached the wrist, there they fitted comfortably, and were trimmed with a gold fringe; the belt or girdle was of most exquisite handiwork, and consisted of a double cordage of richest material wrought in threads of gold, the ends finished in beautiful tassels, the round part from which the threads were suspended being beaded with emeralds.

This belt was tied around the waist, and the tassels hung unevenly at the left side. Below the girdle on the left side was stitched a pocket for the stylus and tablet, while the handkerchief was carried in the girdle.

CHAPTER II.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ANCIENT PETOSÉGA.

It is in a kind of bewilderment that I attempt to write in our tongue a description of this vast buried city from the peculiar and significant characters on the parchment. It has taken much toil and patient research to render the symbols of this dead language intelligible even, not to speak of the far greater difficulty of expressing in another tongue its full, true, and complete meaning, as well as its beauty, sublimity, and grandeur. Now, as I look at this legend, and have a full though mute realization of the glorious story to be told, it is almost with despair that I begin the task ; but knowing the wealth of ancient lore, by the few glimpses I have already had, in these mystic scrolls, I attempt a faithful reproduction in our own beloved language.

Wonderful metropolis ! Where are to be found such uniform, unparalleled gorgeousness, such vast array of buildings, such structures, temples, mosques, amphitheatres, shrines, and palaces ? Such beauty and symmetry in all her streets, parks, and thoroughfares ? Such indescribable splendor in myriad ways ? The architect of this unrivalled city must have viewed the sun setting to rest on his western throne when the horizon line parts the glorious orb, leaving the lingering half elliptic, outspread on a canvas of blue, the sublimest effect ever presented to human eyes.

It was this scene that suggested to the mind of the ancient architect of Petoséga the ground plan of the city. The effect of the declining sun at this point was caught; the golden rays with elliptic centre or base became the scheme by which the metropolis was laid out. This is only an incident showing the inborn love of this people for natural harmony and beauty. It is an evidence of the genius of the Petoségans in adapting the æsthetic worth and beauty of the natural world to the works and structures their own hands had reared. They thus appreciated that fine æsthetic law, that the principle of beauty is the law of utility. Their superior intelligence saw not only the passive grandeur of nature, but in this very grandeur an inner world, suggestive of exquisite form and design for the highest ideals in human activity. They saw and grasped these two influences, the one that makes for culture and development, the other that assists to the noblest result in human handiwork. This double sense the Petoségans had in high degree, an attainment to which very few races have arrived. History seems to indicate that this quality of cultured intellect was found only among the ancient peoples, and then in but few instances, notably the Greeks. They, as a nation, had that susceptibility to rapture, which is possible only to the finest souls. Their perceptive intellects, in full sympathy with their surroundings, found in this ever-changing environment the highest soul exaltation. On the face of beauty glimmered a moral meaning. Their spiritual nature gave response to the morally beautiful, always voicing the mood of nature. This supernatural element in life was with them the highest requisite of human existence.

It is in the adaptation of this plan drawn from the

heavens to a contemplated city on the earth, that we see their power of finding utility in beauty. What spot of the green world could equal this matchless design? What part of the famed garden of the Hesperides would be in harmony with this ideal of form and color? What could approach this grand geometric figure? An arc of the heavens with golden radii! There must have been something in the wealth and beauty of terrestrial nature that suggested to the architect's sensitive mind the sense of harmony with this sky sublimity.

It would seem that in the luxurious vales and high ridged hills the whole of nature's splendor was expended, the expanse in all directions was so charming. The first fine aspect that meets our gaze is a crescent bay, whose waters of emerald green many leagues distant widen into a limitless sea. Rock-ribbed hills of majestic eminence tower on either side; and with the high-topped evergreens that interlock their branches, and the yellow-leaved Seleucion trees, they seemed like celestial palisades. Up from the crescent shore, extending the length of the sunset curve, and gradually ascending inland, are many most beautiful natural terraces, the sea having through long lapse of ages successively lowered its water line, preserving the time of each recession until a most magnificent natural terrace was formed. This is a strangely fascinating scene. There are forty of these terraces, each following exactly a geometric arc without the slightest deviation. Each terrace is sixty feet high and seventy feet deep. All together seem to form a vast natural amphitheatre, while the sparkling waters below serve as the crystal floor. Here the gods might indeed hold their festivals, or the Olympian Jove, through cycling time, make his abode.

When the Petoségans chose this location for their city, the terraces were inlaid with fine white marble, making the whole effect strikingly unique.

Then, stretching away from the highest terrace, widening sharply inland, was a vast plain, without the slightest undulation. The architect's straight-edge, if laid or extended anywhere on its surface, would line it at every point, while the lofty hills on either side gave the scene a sense of beauty and security. From this last terrace, extending inward and on each side to the hills, a large part of the plain was left in the form of a huge elliptic space, making the great public garden of the city. It had no historic equal in grandeur and beauty.

First, as one approached from the steps of Parian marble, leading up to the grand amphitheatre, was the dazzling sapphire wall encircling the garden, called so from the brilliant stones embedded in its surface. This wall was thirty feet high and fifteen feet wide. The design was of a checked surface or face, the checks being twelve inches wide, and alternating with differently colored stones. The top of the wall rose to a pointed centre, surmounted by an open-work fence of agate, cut into diamond form. This was a very heaven of changing color, and the scene sent forth a brilliance indescribable.

The material of this wall was held together by an art of masonry now long lost. The cement was made from a substance found in the region of Petoséga, but now exhausted or buried in the immense floes that have since come down through long ages from the north. The material itself was made into cement by a device of its architect, by which it was rendered absolutely like the solid rocks, and could not be chiselled, broken, or frozen, worn away, or changed in texture, form, or color, by

wind, rain, or heat. The mixture set very quickly, and required the most skilful handling; for when once applied, nothing was known hard enough in steel or any metal to deface or remove it.

Four grand gates secured this beautiful garden. Each pair faced each other. They were made of huge squares of amber stone, quarried from a plain some miles north-west of the city. These gates towered to the height of the wall, and were framed in solid burnished columns of metal, now called steel. They opened and closed by combination bars and locks. The Herald of the city opened them in the morning as the sun shed his beams aslant the great plain, and closed them as the last shades of twilight lingered lovingly on the bay.

The solid amber blocks were engraved from the beautiful fantastic creations observed in the twilight.

On one of the pair opening toward the bay is a mysterious and delightful design. It represents a twilight scene far out at sea. At this particular portion of the globe the glories of the dying sun are marvellous. This expiring glory fills the whole heavens; earth, sea, and sky are radiated with a thousand hues and quick transformations of color that startle and charm the eye. These brilliant effects the artist's skill has portrayed with marvellous likeness on one of the amber squares of the gates facing the sea. On the other of this pair is a most beautiful example of the unrivalled art of the Petoségans, which represents, in the glory of the daily dying Phœbus, the mystic dance of the mermaids on the marble surface of the bay of Selenella, surrounded by a shower of gold from the overhanging canopy of brilliant cloud, descending like precious and gentle rain upon the joyous nymphs.

On one of the pair leading into the thoroughfares of the city is painted the arc of golden radii, in honor of nature's majesty. On the other is a great twilight scene. In the atmosphere which prevails at late evening, by some mysterious undulations of the air currents this highly colored atmosphere is suddenly transformed into great transparent mountains of different sizes and colors ; blue, purple, amber, scarlet, and sapphire, forming a three-quarters circle, a horseshoe of fairy mountains hanging aloft in the heavens at twilight.

On the pair looking to the north are painted the rainbow gates of the great deep, a wonderful natural phenomenon observed in no other quarter of the world, but seen there still in dimmed splendor. This is also a sunset scene, but of what unparalleled magnificence ! This is but rarely observed, however, and then under peculiar atmospheric conditions. On these evenings the sky is clear as crystal at first, and the atmosphere is balmy and delicious. All is quiet, and the air moves with such feathery flights that the slightest haze is hardly perceptible. The sun's disc is fiery red, and its awful brilliance flashes on one like the terrible glare of an evil eye. It is now that the supernatural scene begins. Just as the lower arc reaches the line of the horizon a dim yellow haze covers the vast plain of the sea, veiling the crescent belt of Petoséga's hills. Simultaneously with the coming of the mist over earth and sea, where both seem merged into one, slowly and exactly at the same time on each side to the right and left rise and form gorgeous rainbows, that move gently up the sky. They ascend in pairs of most brilliant color and hue. Upward they move until all the sky is meridianed with bows, which meet in a grand symphony of color in the zenith. The mist is so transparent

that it does not obscure the vision, but adds a mysterious romantic ecstasy which words can never express. This grand scene lasts until the sun is lost to view. With such scenic grandeur the Petoségans should have been the most delicately poised and perceptive people of antiquity. How lack we the inspiration of that grand primeval day, when Nature was in love with mankind and illumined his soul with all her radiance ! How has she withdrawn from her later devotees, and veiled her blush and glow in turbid cloud and murky haze ! Will there ever come that mystic time again when humanity's estrangement from Nature shall cease, and she overwhelm once more the human soul with her glory ?

As we come up the marble steps of the terraces, these grand amber squares, with the rainbows in relief, make a gorgeous spectacle. As one looks at the gates, closed or opened, he sees a vast hall, dome-shaped and sublimely ribbed with meridians. The pavement is made of emerald green stone, and adamantine in hardness. This brilliant flagging runs through the garden from east to west, making a grand base for the painted rainbow gates. This substance was quarried very near the site of the ancient city by the sea, where the workmen were digging for the foundation of the metropolis, and the artist found this beautiful material ready for his designing. What a strange coincidence of the ideals of nature and those of man !

Far out at sea in a line directly west are situated the Isles of the Blessed, three beautiful, green-crested pearls of the ocean, said to have arisen out of the billows, and to be the embowered groves of the goddesses of Petoséga. In the wonderful transparency that prevails in the part of twilight that just precedes the shades of

night, these bright circling islands appear in perfect outline far across the crystal waves. The artist's skill is again disclosed as we view these Blessed Isles and the surrounding sea, painted with dexterous hand and the guidance of an intuitive soul upon the pair of gates opening from the south of the garden.

My pen falters as I attempt to interpret the original parchment, for how weak the power to transmit from a native to a foreign tongue the language of sublimity. A vivid imagination must needs assist the reader of the modern manuscript to do justice to the original reality.

CHAPTER III.

THE CARMINE BUD AND THE FULL-BLOWN ROSE.

IT will be remembered that the two citizens of Petoséga had met very early in the morning, and we left them in the temple of Etis. Some time later the golden beams of the sun, now rising above the Vastas (by this name the mountains on the south side of the city were called), fell aslant the delicious vines and trees of the beautiful Calla grove, passed through the famous garden with its walls of sapphire, shed a shower of gold on the curved marble terraces beyond, and dipped their tips in the crystal bay below. The air was sweetened with every perfume and odor from flower, tree, and vine, as if the sun, loving the sweets of bloom, had drawn all the nectar for his own delight. There was no wind ; simply the soft breeze, full of the wine of health. The sky above was one mantle of blue, excepting here and there perfect oval masses of white fleecy cloud, set like pearls in heaven's morning robe. From every tree and bush the glad songs of the birds were heard. Not a note of sadness among all those pipers of the wood—nothing but tones of joy—one long, soft, unmarred pæan for their free, happy existence, each having in his own little breast his empire and his sceptre.

And never was the sea of Lossa and the emerald bay of Selenella more beautiful. With a polish like that of

the purest plate glass, without a ripple, it followed to the right and left the magnificent curves of the shore. Did not Nature mean in her exultant mood that morning, that the most excellent loveliness of woman should be the jewelled setting of her glorious extravagance? That the rose, the diamond in the kingdom of bloom, should be set in the delight of this enchanted hour? Such was indeed the purpose of this exquisite display of treasures, that her own peerless majesty might be the fitting glass in which to mirror the perfection of woman.

Down below the terraces on the white pebbled beach, as if the snowy stones were scattered there as a walk for purity, stood a beautiful young girl, with her left hand resting on her golden girdle, and the right at her side, looking mutely into the clear surface of the waves. She was the most beautiful of all the fair young girls of her native Petoséga. Her name was Hita. She was just crossing the threshold of maidenhood. Her hair was long and flaxen, like great skeins of finest silk, and it fell in soft tresses down her well-formed waist, which was not slender nor large, but full and graceful, following lines that a Greek artist would draw in outlining a model. Her eyes were of a delicious blue, like the soft sky over her head. She was tall, and her whole figure gave the idea of symmetry and grace. She was the embodiment of rhythmic motion. Her face was a perfect type of her race, and showed her Grecian origin. It was of that oval round, the most charming of all outlines, and her velvety cheeks were flushed with the sweetest roses. Such was she, a fit setting for nature's ecstatic hour: the white, spotless beach, the canopy of blue, the green bay before her, the marble terraces behind her. So sweet was she in all her loveliness that her friends, as

the highest term of endearment, called her the "Carmine Bud."

She was an orphan, but her gentle character had gained for her all the friends she needed. She was strong in her limbs and agile in movement; one of her favorite amusements was to watch the waves recede when the winds were high, and secure the precious stones washed up by the sea. This was a dangerous practice, and she was almost the only one who was sufficiently quick-motioned to do this with safety. The reader has been introduced to the Carmine Bud; he shall now make the acquaintance of the Full-blown Rose.

On the third terrace from the beach, and a little to the right of a straight line running up to the amber squares of the great gates of the sapphire wall, sat a most charming woman. Her chair was made from the branches of the Seleucion tree, whose wood is of the color of pure gold, and which grew on the spur of hills running to the right on the north of the city. To such a woman the blissful Muses would render glad homage. The white-armed, immortal Juno must indeed have watched over the entrance into the world of this sublime woman. On her face was the soul of a living Psyche—that sweet, soft, slightly melancholy expression which is never present except on the countenance of a perfect woman. She was tall, with luscious eyes of black, and wavy, rich, dark golden hair, worn in the classic roll which we see in the exquisite figures of Greek sculpture. Her figure showed Athenian origin. Her breast was deep and full, her shoulders rounded into perfect grace, her fingers soft, long, and gently tapering, showing taste for the fine arts. Her waist was a Venus waist, like the exquisite Milo. Full-blown roses were in her cheeks, and her lips were

curves of scarlet. Her sandals were embroidered with her own handiwork. She wore a creamy tunic, yet hardly a tunic, for it fitted the form nicely about the waist, shoulders, and arms, and fell in ample folds to the feet. The front was fastened with precious stones; and she wore a girdle of blue and gold, and pretty tassels tied in double rows hung at her left side. Around her throat was a necklace of turquoise and pearl. A brilliant blue sunshade rested on her right shoulder. She was leaning gently back enjoying the heavenly scene, the while perusing the beautiful drama of Selmos, "*Delakta*." What mortal man would not enslave his very soul through an eternity for the privilege of a seat by that woman's side? Her name was Lenore.

Such were the beautiful, the exquisite, the noble, the all-divine girlhood and womanhood, the most fitting setting in these few golden moments of changeful nature. But now the granted reign of harmony and peace was over. While Lenore was reading the passage where *Delakta* so pitifully bewails her dead brother, the motionless sleep of the sea was ended. The winds suddenly rose and the waves rocked high. She had just begun the last passage when a despairing shriek startled her from the direction where Hita had been standing and musing. She looked, and beheld the silken tresses of the Carmine Bud on the crest of a huge wave some feet from the shore.

Whence was the help to come in this mortal hour? This was not a holiday when thousands crowd the terraces, nor in the afternoon when there are many strollers, but in the middle of the forenoon when all was quiet and not a soul near. No one but Lenore heard the shriek of the Carmine Bud; but her own agonizing cry, as she

rushed to the shore, fell upon the quick ears of a tall, graceful figure, just emerging from the Seleucion grove on the north, which slopes down to the terraces and beach. He was perfect in symmetry and strength, alert, keen of eye, quick of movement enough to have been a victor at the great garland games at Pella. The cry of Lenore and her hasty flight directed him. He had taken but a few steps when his quick vision descried the helpless form on the angry waves, now still farther out in the deep. Lenore and Losmega—for this was the name of this fine specimen of manhood—reached the beach at the same time. He gave her a wistful look, a knightly salute, then flung aside his rich tunic, and plunged into the water. Bravely he met the dash and foam. Over and over the maddened surf he sprang as though his element were the sea. By masterful strokes of reserve power he gained the crest of the wave on which the almost lifeless figure of Hita lay thrown up from the depths for the second time. Without the loss of a second he put his strong arm about her and struck with the strength of a giant toward the shore. There is an old adage that "fortune favors the brave;" but he who uttered it perished in the eruptions of Vesuvius. Far better it is to believe that fate smiles on the devotee of duty; and that is the motive that gives nobility to fortitude.

With a few strong strokes Losmega brought his fair burden to the white curved strand where she had a few minutes before stood. Losmega, himself much exhausted by the sudden effort, lay on his elbow for an instant, while Lenore ministered to her slowly recovering companion. Her sweet smile of gratitude was reward enough for all Losmega's toil and trouble. The glance of her

dark, tender eyes was to him a rapture ; never before had he felt so sweet and permeating an influence, and her voice was as the tones of heaven-born music, as she recognized the increasing signs of life.

"Noble it was in thee to risk thy life for that of another, for the sea was very high and perilous. She will recover, thanks to thee and the gods, for the color is coming to her cheeks, and she begins to move."

"No noble deed, fair lady," replied Losmega. "It was but the call to duty, which I have been taught to obey."

With this last word he arose and stepped to where Hita lay. Her eyes were now open, and with a sweet smile she recognized the kind faces beside her.

"What has happened, dear stranger?" she said, as she lifted her eyes to Lenore.

"The sudden rise of the billows caught thee unawares," replied Lenore.

"O, yes ; I recall it now," said Hita, "it comes back to me as it were a dream. I saw a most beautiful stone beneath the water, and as it receded I stepped out to get it, standing upon a round-shaped rock of considerable size, when suddenly it went from under me, and before I could regain my feet the swell was carrying me out to sea. O, the gods bless ye both, and thee, my deliverer," as she turned her eyes to Losmega. "I shall soon recover from this faint."

While Lenore watched over Hita, Losmega went to the city for a litter and slaves. In a little while he returned, and the Carmine Bud was placed tenderly in it and carefully carried by the slaves, Lenore and Losmega walking closely behind.

This superb youth and perfect maiden had never met

before this hour. The superior womanhood enchanted the noble manhood ; the noble manhood had a charm for the superior womanhood ; while underneath it all began to work the sweet, invisible influence of love. Although they had not met before, they were residents of the same city, of the same race, and of high social position.

After Losmega's father (his mother had died early) met his death on one of his returning sea-voyages, Losmega travelled for a number of years to various lands, and had once or twice only visited his native city during this period. He had just returned from his last journey, and that very day had woven a wreath and laid it upon the tomb of his father, which was situated in the beautiful Ceramicus of the Petoségans, in a fine plain to the north-west of the city. He was just descending the gentle slope of the Seleucion grove, which inclined toward the beach and the terraces, to view again the charmed scenes of his childhood, when the startled cry of Lenore took him to the shore and to the rescue of that beautiful girl.

Lenore and Losmega followed behind the litter, and quickly became acquainted. Lenore directed the litter to be carried to her own home on the Avenue Rosetta. Hita was quite revived, though still weak, and she thanked Losmega with great tenderness. He said a few parting words to Lenore, as she invited him to call the next day to learn the condition of the girl whose life he had risked his own to save.

Thus by an accident is this beautiful young girl woven into the web and woof of two other lives. He who listens shall learn how the Carmine Bud shall save the Full-blown Rose.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CLIMATE OF PETOSÉGA—ITS ARCHITECTURE—ITS CLASSIC LIFE.

How inscrutable are Nature's ways, how perfect and complete are her powers, how independent her life ! How far above the fragile, crumbling works of man, how reproachful of his weakness, how full of contempt for his finiteness ! How unchanging is the purpose of Nature, how transcendently beyond the little desires, thoughts, and caprices of mankind ! How she alters her systems in conformity to her own purpose alone ! How she turns the poles of earth askance to new enthroned law, or pushes oblique the centric globe, or mixes the vernal spring with frost and snow, or freezes the tropic clime with arctic ice ! In the centuries of the dead past, when our majestic Petoséga was in its glory, its climate was like that of the lovely, sunny Italy, the land of the eternal bloom, or like the soft and delightful Athens. The breezes from the Selenella were as gentle as those from Virgil's villa, or the Muses' enchanted Piræus. But long since Nature changed her face, and the soft winds turned to the harsh Gemini and the Pisces. The olive and the palm have yielded to the hemlock and the pine. The silver voices of the rippling streams have been hushed for three-fourths of the year by the cruel ice. Her classic groves of vari-colored leaves have changed to ugly woods, clothed in frozen

snow. Yet, despite all this transformation, Nature still beguiles us with some of her former beauty and glory, at that portion of the year when the sign of the Virgin is high. Then at the time of our lovely city the twelve moons went round in unending spring. No country of southern Europe to-day could equal the climatic loveliness of this northern region of that age. Then the clouds above were gentle, warm, and fleecy, and hung over the earth like a beneficent canopy. Now the great mother turns aside like a human mother from an erring child. The winter's cold drives all the birds away, yet there is one little songster that flits about the witch-hazel and purling brook, whose love of native wood is stronger than storm and tempest—for through all these centuries it has never left its ancient wood. It is a battle-scarred little veteran now, for through the incessant falling of the flakes of snow upon its tiny back, during these ages, it has changed here and there the brown to snowflake white.

The white-plumed Albatross is the only sea-bird that has refused to leave the haunts of its ancient kin, and may still be seen to fly along the rocky caverns, and oft when passing a nook or crag utters a mournful cry, as if its very instinct brought up a memory of a time when all the world seemed sunshine.

And with this beautiful climate the architecture was in perfect harmony. The streets of the city, I have omitted to say, were patterned after the bars of gold, running for miles in great radial thoroughfares, on a perfectly level plain. These main avenues were more than ten miles in length, and absolutely straight. The cross streets were slight curves following the idea of geometric arcs, and in all conforming to the ideal sunset before

mentioned. Thus Petoséga had a design far more famous than that of old Babylon, situated on the plain of Euphrates. The long streets were the great meridians, the short the parallels of latitude ; thus the plan of the city was a section of the beautiful design of a globe, the finest use of the ideal of pure figure ever applied to human ingenuity. The wisdom of the Egyptians was never put to such magnificent adaptation. The people of Babylon had an illustrious city, but in design the Petoségans possessed far finer perception.

By this plan our metropolis consisted of almost innumerable squares. The houses on these squares were high, and the inner space was divided into courts and gardens. The architecture of both private and public structures was extremely tasteful, elaborate, and rich. The pride of the citizen in his private home extended to that large domicile, his nation ; and if we could have a detailed description of public and private edifices, we should find that the architecture certainly equalled any of the cities of antiquity.

At uniform distances a square was left for parks, and for fountains, which flowed from marble vases. Trees of finest variety and cultivation filled the parks, the olive and palm and acacia predominating. Each street also had its lines of stately trees, that stood like rows of sentinels, detailed from generation to generation.

Petoséga extended northeast till it reached the open sea of Lossa, thus reaching across a peninsula ; and at the extremity the large and magnificent harbor was situated. The natural protective features of the harbor were not great, nor were fortifications necessary, for the winds were soft and mellow, and the lightest craft could dally with impunity with the waves.

Each house had its fine landscape gardens, and nearly every one a fountain. The streets were lighted by a peculiar gas found in that vicinity, which issued from iron posts of graceful form, the top of these columns of metal being set with jets which gave to the illumination all the colors of the rainbow. The streets were paved with wood of a very hard nature, while the sidewalks were of another hard substance, and unusually wide.

The great business of the Petoségans was commerce, carried on with all the nations of the day. Agriculture was also the diversion of the wealthy citizens. This was done by slaves, of whom there were one hundred thousand in the city. They had no part in the affairs of the land, and their lives depended upon their obedience to their masters. They were, however, as a rule, treated kindly, and many of them held high positions of trust and responsibility.

The citizens spent much of their time in the study of poetry, philosophy, and the arts. This cultivation permeated all classes.

One thing must be said about the women of Petoséga. There was no difference in the municipal rights of men and women. How long the equality had lasted no one knows, for from time immemorial the great Magna Charta of their liberties and suffrages contained these laws of equality. The women not only had these State rights, but were also specially invested with power in the great economies of life, moral, social, and domestic. The citizens were born and bred to high ideals, thus having less inherent inclination to evil. They had enthroned Love, Virtue, and Truth, and the enthronement was not less in the virtuous lives and exemplary character than in the

marble shrines and golden-domed temples of the goddesses. In all the questions that pertained to the welfare of the State and the individual, both men and women had the same enthusiastic interest, the same true and courageous spirit, and they had the liberty of putting into execution their opinions and convictions alike. Whether the absence of dens of vice was wholly due to the power of women's influence, cannot be said ; but it is certain that these places did not exist in the civil polity, and it is certain that the woman in all the relations of life was the equal of the man. If I translate rightly the spirit of the words of the parchment which the Ancient of Days bequeathed me, this equality of the sexes was due to the proper and natural understanding of man and woman's relations to each other. This, I think, was not from any conscious understanding or system of philosophy arrived at from disputation and logic, but rather from the instinctive dictates of justice and natural harmony of life. This isolated instance of the glory of private and State life is a most delightful echo from the shores of antiquity. We are thankful for this scrap of ancient record, and are rejoiced that any of our race has been noble enough to adopt instinctively the law of Nature as the law of Life, and in this way reached that realm of high existence which perhaps remains for those of our day who are of the clearest vision.

Another thing which betokens the civilized customs of that age, was their system of dress. This, while it enhanced the beauty of the human form, did not crush, disfigure, and destroy it. There was none of that despicable style of the Elizabethan era, cutting the feminine waist in twain. The Petoségan women had full flowing lines, allowing the vital forces of the system their natural

play, and thus the roses in their cheeks did not die. Hygeia was the goddess, and a beautiful style of dress grew up in conformity. The drapery of the women was like the lovely folds of Greek sculpture. All the articles of dress hung from the shoulders. Lenore's habit will answer as the general type. The bright colors were used much more than duller ones. The girdle was only for ornament, and worn loosely. The sandals common to the races of that day were in use, but had much elaboration and refinement about them. The Petoségans possessed the qualities of simple common sense, of self-control, and of strength of personality ; and these qualities tended to make the individual taste the standard in all private affairs. There was no enslavement to a depraved social habit, and no surrender of individuality to the vulgar demands of a more vulgar autocracy.

CHAPTER V.

THE CHARACTER OF LOSMEGA—THE SECOND DART OF THE ARCHER—THE CARMINE BUD.

SOME one has said,

"The inequality of nature's legacy
Makes half of mortal's woe."

Losmega seemingly had all the blessings of Heaven showered upon him. He had every beauty of form and feature. He had fortune also, and was descended from an ancient family. Nature had given him a broad and generous heart, and endowed him with an intellect which found delight in poetry, philosophy, and the classics of his native language. Aside from his travels around the world, he had heretofore been engaged in the settling of his father's vast affairs ; but Losmega had an ambition for high municipal position and offices of State, and was already a favorite in official circles.

Part of the next day Losmega occupied himself with the details of business ; then, when these were finished, he drew a chair to the casement and gave himself up to the enjoyment of the gorgeous cloud effects to which he had been so long a stranger. The contemplation of this scene inspired in his heart anew the old patriotism and admiration for his native land, and he exclaimed with all youth's fervor and enthusiasm :

"Glorious is the land of my birth ! Forever may the

city of Truth, Virtue, and Love do honor to the handiwork of man, and may our patron goddess, Etis, grant to us forever this treasure-house of national beauty and sublimity!"

For a few minutes Losmega still sat in a thoughtful mood. Since the incident of yesterday his heart had been as troubled as the sea from which he had rescued the sinking Hita. Here was a new element in his existence, but an uncertain element. Losmega had seen many beautiful women, but this was the first time his heart had been touched.

The vision of the bewitching Lenore nestled in his heart like a treasure of joy, though a treasure he might not be able to keep. Here was the ideal of all his dreams—the one woman among all the women of the world.

The hour when he should make his visit of inquiry had arrived. A slave ushered him into the presence of Lenore and Hita. A harp stood by the side of Hita, and a guitar near Lenore, and they were discoursing about the beauty and charms of music and poetry when Losmega entered. A delicate pink flush welcomed her guest. She was now even more exquisitely beautiful than at the noonday of yesterday. She was the perfection of grace in her simple but classic costume. The Carmine Bud had fully recovered, and was beautiful also in her morning of youth.

"O, kind friend," said Hita, "I have been thinking how I should thank thee enough, for thou didst save my life. If thou hadst not been there I should have perished. But know that my gratefulness is greater than my tongue can speak. Forever I shall remember it. May things so happen that I can return as great a favor,

though I pray Heaven it be not in such a fashion. May Etis and the Graces bless thee ! ”

“ Yes, kind friend,” also spoke Lenore, “ let me thank thee again for saving this dear girl. I have grown to love her, and both of us are grateful to thee, more than words can tell. The gods will in time surely repay thee for thy noble-hearted action.”

“ I ask no praise for duty done, fair ladies,” replied Losmega. “ That I have assisted to save so precious a life is more reward than men or gods can give. But, kind Hita, thou mayst repay,” he continued with a smile, “ and with thy harp.”

The Carmine Bud complied immediately, and with a power and skill that charmed her listeners. Again the fair girl expressed a desire for some occasion which would prove her gratitude. She little knew how mighty the events that destiny had in store for her.

At this meeting the conversation ran on the events of each other's lives, and Losmega told of his long absence from the city and his travels in different lands. He spoke of the death of his father, and of how he was emerging from the grove after laying the garland of love upon the tomb. Lenore also spoke of her life in the city, which she had not left for some years, and of the death of her father some years before. The time was only too short. Before he bade them adieu, both Lenore and Hita played some beautiful strains, Lenore on the guitar, and Hita on the harp.

Losmega returned to his home with a heart full of happy anticipation. He knew even now that his own feelings were not unlike those in the soul of Lenore. Lenore was a type that here and there in communities is occasionally to be found, a type fit for the artist of form,

or the teacher of the highest moral excellence. To love her was to possess a world. Her nature transported one to a realm of perfect purity. Such was the beautiful Lenore.

Days had now passed into months. The lovers heeded not the speed of the spectre hours. There was only one season in their existence, and that was the spring-time. The stream of love ran in a circle like the fabled Oceanus. Love had created for them a new world, in which there was for aye a cloudless sky, and heaven's blue arch was ever full of blissful assurance. The hopes of their young lives were as brilliant as the star-strewn heavens. Gayly they sailed the silver sea of fancy ; no shadow had crossed their horizon of promise. They had been transported to the realm of the ideal, and never dreamed that the gentle gales which fanned them, the soft Arabian breezes, could be changed to the poisonous, deadly blasts of Egypt, or the destroying simoon of Nubia. So happy were they, that they measured this transient world with the measure of the eternities.

Yet in their most joyous moments, they had not forgotten the realities of life ; but those realities, for each, had become freighted with tenfold significance. They were to join hands in the grand pilgrimage of earth, partners in all its sunshine and shadows. This ideal love did not conflict with the duties of the exacting hour ; but it was not in their nature to weave of fancy's warp and woof a web of storm and blasting wind, to fling out and mantle a cloudless heaven. Theirs was not the temperament to give to the weavers of our destiny any threads of sorrow. They would much rather steal from those blind sisters all their crimson coloring. They beckoned no spectres to the moonlight of their joy. All

unconscious of the noiseless approach of a vicissitude of sorrow, they drank the nectar of love and bliss.

Many beautiful rambles had Losmega and Lenore taken, with ever-increasing love and delight. Nearer and nearer came they to each other, and now they were each other's own. To-day they were to visit the fine Calla grove, so fascinating to both with its multitude of flowers and vines and trees.

This beautiful garden of Calla ran a quarter of a mile on the crest of the hill, which was said to be the remains of the dreadful Floating Mountain, whose terrors had been forgotten in the hoary remoteness of the tradition. When, however, some association was suggested concerning it, shudders and wild imaginings passed through the hearts of the present inhabitants of Petoséga. But for the most part few remembered the myth; fewer still believed it; and as nothing had occurred within the present generation, there was nothing to suggest danger or necessity of precaution; and so the citizens of Petoséga performed the duties of life from age to age, and slept the quiet sleep of those assured of safety and security. As for our hero and heroine, it is doubtful whether they had ever known of the legend, for the reason that the later generations became less and less interested in handing it down to their successors. At all events, in this full bloom of love not the slightest shadow of the past laid its dark wing on their morning. With joyous hearts they threaded the streets in the direction of the grove, climbed the hill together, and found themselves half unconsciously in the exquisite garden. All the art of this brilliant people was expended here. The skill of landscape architecture was shown in its perfection. Workmen were constantly beautifying it and repairing

the ravages of Time's disorder. To have in any degree a just conception of its wonderful beauty, the most illustrious gardens of history must assist the fancy. Among the ancients, only the great hanging gardens of Babylon can be compared with it, and among the moderns, the gardens of the Louvre. The numerous designs of paths and walks charmed the eye ; most delightful arbors were placed here and there, and rustic seats in the balmy air afforded delicious rest. Great fountains sent their miniature worlds glistening athwart the rays of sun or moon. The enchanting birds made glad both morn and eve, and sweetened the very winds with choral song. The soft air from the silver Selenella was like the breath of Morpheus on the brow of day. So high was the Calla garden above the bay that the eye revelled in sweet visions for miles around over land and sea.

There was on the southern side of the grove a most delightful walk, called the Beautiful Way, for this was generally regarded as the special boulevard of lovers. From time immemorial they had frequented the spot, and the twilight time was the golden period chosen for this choicest of all earth's entertainment.

So Lenore and Losmega were indeed fitted to ramble in this traditional pathway of lovers. The afternoon on which they strolled there was most perfect. Soft was the sunshine, and delicious were the breezes. The grass was of a fresh, delicate green, and the palm and olive trees stood in straight rows, making an archway of shade. Here and there the arbutus and cistus trailed around them : that winged beauty of the insect world, which was seen here in exceptionally rich and glowing colors, the butterfly, flitted to and fro among the flowers, as if comparing its own loveliness with theirs. Such were the

day and scene, and such the walk these happy lovers took !

On the sunset verge of the Beautiful Way, Lenore and Losmega sat down under the shade of the olive tree. On her middle finger he placed a slight gold ring, token of accepted love. The ring was but the initiatory symbol of betrothal. The sacred, lasting, and enduring emblem was of a beauty and uniqueness impossible to describe. It was an ornament peculiar to the love shrine of the Petoségans. The centre was onyx, shaped in half hearts ; this was set in a border of pure beaten gold, around which precious stones of small size were artistically placed. There was a diamond, an amethyst, a pearl, a garnet, and an opal. The onyx was transparent, and on its under side was transcribed, "love forever," and "heart to heart." In the exact centre was engraved an opening rose ; and over the face, in scroll-like characters, were initial letters of their names in gold. The whole was about two-thirds of an inch square. It was worn over the heart suspended by a tiny gold chain. Such was the beautiful symbol of betrothed love, called the "Eretta." Then, of the long green leaves that hung down like welcoming clusters all around them, Losmega wove an olive crown, and with the seal of his lips upon it, placed it upon the brow of his loved Lenore. When they left the garden, it was in the beauty of the dying sun, and of consecrated love.

BOOK THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

MOONLIGHT EXCURSION ON THE SELENELLA—THE LIGHT- ING OF THE "ALBATROSS"—FIRST COILING OF THE SERPENT BEHIND THE ROSE.

THE bay of Selenella was one of the most beautiful bodies of water, and remains so to this day. It was soft and placid, and emerald green in color, and upon its beach were pebbles of various grotesque and picturesque forms. It was bordered by the hills—whose stately trees, with most luxuriant foliage, made a delightful setting—and the entrance to the bay was by those wonderful marble terraces and the garden of the sapphire wall. The situation of Petoséga was most fortunate. For while there was a vast extent of plain, large enough for the largest city, at the north-east side, there was the open sea of Lossa, which afforded the most desirable facilities for extensive commerce, while the magnificent bay of Selenella, located at the south-west portion of the city, was a most delightful sheet of water for pleasure and recreation. Every afternoon the bay was covered with gay crafts. The more wealthy had great galleys, with streamers flowing in brilliant colors. The bay was a charming scene when its surface was covered by these vessels of pleasure, each in its gorgeous dress, and each unique in itself. The

yacht of Losmega was one of the most beautiful to be seen. It was patterned after the white-plumed Albatross, a sea-bird which he much admired, and the favorite bird of his native land. The boat was long and slender, the bow ran into the shapely bird's neck and head; the sides swelled gracefully, and the stern expanded in pleasing curves. The banner was his country's flag, a field of gold, with the Albatross and crescent moon.

"What a beautiful sail we shall have, dear Lenore," said Losmega, as he ascended the marble steps of her dwelling to accompany her and Hita to the bay.

"It will be delicious," Lenore replied. "Sit in this rustic chair a moment, and Hita and I will be with thee." As she tripped off lightly for her wraps, Losmega gazed at the superb figure with his heart in his eyes. Her dress was a rich purple of finest texture, with a girdle, and turban of embroidered golden silk, while on her breast glittered the various lights of the precious stones and the mystic inscriptions of their symbol of love. This was the first time she had worn his beautiful gift. The thrill that shot through his soul as it shone and scintillated over the heart of his beloved, made him for a moment oblivious to everything else in the universe.

The three now went gayly down the thoroughfare through the garden, and down the terraces to the boat. The slaves had brought Lenore's guitar and Hita's harp. The servants managed the mechanism of the boat in the stern, while the lovers and Hita took the secluded cabin in the bow.

"Play to us one of thy beautiful songs, dear Hita," said Losmega, when they were fairly seated, and began their course around the bay.

"What shall it be?" said Hita.

"A song to the goddess of pleasure," said Losmega, and Lenore gave assent with a delicious smile.

Hita took her harp, and after a little prelude, sang and played her sweetest song :

THE PLEASURE SONG.

I.

In the heart's high glee
O'er the rippling sea
 Merrily onward glide;
We toss to the air
All the mind's dull care—
 The crested waves we ride !

II.

Let the moonbeams dance
In their winsome prance ;
 A silvery way they trace;
In sheens from above,
Like mirrors of love,
 We're wrapt in fond embrace.

III.

Greet the playful breeze
As over the seas
 It brings its merry lay;
Let the circling hours
Hide well in their bowers
 Thro' all the summer day.

IV.

Let the stars above
Bind with wreaths of love
 The heart unchanged and true;
And be for all time
Its symbol sublime
 Up in the vaults of blue.

"Thy song is lightsome and sweet, dear Hita," said Lenore and Losmega in chorus.

O halcyon sea, emerald as at that hour thirty centuries in the dead past ! Then all the seasons were one long summer solstice, and the sun never went askance to the southern sky and turned his cold rays upon thee. Gentle clime, under thy touch existence loses its harsh phases and becomes a fairy life. Still art thou the ivory gate to the realm of summer dream. Beautiful, benign Petoséga, sweet Selenella, sad was that ancient contest, when earth and sky struggled to possess thy glory. Yet in thy wrecked and disordered beauty, thou art still the mistress of the northern seas. We see not the olive and orange and the imperishable asphodel; and did all thy legendary glory now crown thee, here would all dwell through the changeless years. Now, as I write, sitting on the white carpet of the beach, the moonbeam flits about with fairy feet, as methinks it loved to caress the nymph-like beauty of Lenore on that star-lit eve so long ago. I wonder if Lenore and Losmega ever visit now this scene of their young love, and hallow it with invisible strains of lyre and harp.

"And now, fair Lenore," said Losmega, "play on thy guitar that most exquisite of all melodies, 'The Siege of the Geraldan.'" Lenore slightly changed her seat and woke the strains of that delightful song. The parchment is here so yellowed and fragmentary and torn that it cannot be given. But it was the celebrated siege of the city of that name, the great heroic song of that day. Six years it was invested, and six years the brave inhabitants defended it, but it fell. As the last tones died away, Losmega lightly slipped to the side of Lenore, and what passed between them was only known to the creatures of

the moonbeams ; for by woman's wonderful intuition, Hita had leaned over the side of the boat, and there were none to see.

Then Losmega took up the guitar and provoked this beautiful ditty :

THE SPIRIT OF LOVE.

I.

The Albatross speeds over Lossa's deep sea,
As deep is the love in my bosom for thee,
And doth with the moonbeam unerringly glide,
So thy soul doth my soul to Elysium guide.
Lightly it trips o'er the emerald green waves,
To bask in thy smiles—that is all my heart craves.
Far up above is the sky's arch of blue,
Fixed as the mirror of thyself so true.

II.

In thy presence always throughout the long day
My life will be truly one Beautiful Way.
If ever I look up to thy love-lit eyes
No clouds can hide the bright blue of the skies.
If thy gentle voice sweetly sound ever near,
The bleak of December will never seem drear,
And over my brow let thy soft fingers steal,
While deep in my heart thy love's magic I feel.

III.

If full on thy bosom our symbol I see,
Then plunge may our bark in the turbulent sea ;
If dying I were in the wreck on the strand,
Salvation I'd find in a touch of thy hand ;
And stars of the heavens may then cease to shine,
If only the light of thy sweet face be mine.
Let love be the sun ever rising each day,
And life will be always one Beautiful Way.

And so they glided over the bosom of the deep
Selenella, Lenore and Losmega in love's perfect bliss,

while Hita was musing on the ecstasy of this same passion. Her young heart had never felt the thrill, her sweet girlhood was yet untouched by even so much as a dream of love.

The hours had passed joyously. The moonbeams that were almost vertical when the "Albatross" began her trip, had grown longer and longer, gradually emerging from the water like slender mermaids tired of bath and frolic, and now lay quiet upon the glassy surface. Losmega gave the signal to sail slowly toward the shore, while Lenore and Hita woke a lovely refrain from the guitar and harp.

Losmega's stately craft was not the only one in search of pleasure on that beautiful evening. Here and there the merry boats could be seen in the dusky light, and happy voices pealed forth ever and anon across the crystal waves, while all the sweet stringed instruments broke at intervals into a thousand airs of melodious song.

The "Albatross" had just completed a beautiful circle, and was making the last home tack, when an incident happened that dampened the feelings and spirits of all three. Whether this was merely a happening, or an instance of the wisdom and the will of the great government of the gods, cannot be told; whether this was a thing of pure chance with no conscious end, or whether it was the signal of warning to weak mortality from some invisible agency, who can say?—the circumstances happened, and in accordance with the prevalent superstition, a dire calamity followed, one of the most terrible that ever befell a community. From that hour began also the pathetic and woful ordeal of the lovers. The occurrence made Lenore and Losmega especially sad.

"O see! see the Albatross!" cried Hita suddenly, and as she spoke a great white-plumed bird made circle after circle in the air above their vessel, and finally lighted upon the neck of the bird that formed the bow of the boat. Lenore shrank to the side of Losmega as the fearless creature sat motionless with its great white eye upon them, as if with more than human intelligence it was transmitting by its oppressive, silent presence some terrible message.

"What can mean the presence of this famous bird?" said Lenore in trembling tones. "How beautiful it is, yet how strangely motionless it sits, and how steadily it regards us. Dear Losmega, dost thou think the Albatross a bird of ill omen? Is it a messenger from the gods to apprise mortals of some approaching misfortune? And is this the manner in which it comes to warn us of woe? Never before in the countless times I have seen it did it appear in this gloomy way. O, I hope it portends nothing ill! May it not be the bird of good omen? See how still the night is, and how beautiful! Are any of these circumstances foretold? Does not the oracle say:

"'Still the glassy sea, star-strewn are the skies
When the Albatross ill-omened flies'?"

"Dear Lenore, its action does seem astonishing. So silent and so motionless. It seems oppressed by some gloomy message it has no language to disclose. What dire misfortune can it be brooding? It is so long since I have seen anything to cause me to associate the old traditions with this bird, that the legend has indeed passed from my mind. Yet they say its forebodings were not always verified. See, there is no other Albatross among all the vessels anywhere to be seen. It must be that it was decoyed to our boat because shaped after its own

form and having all its colors. This is all it can mean or signify, dear Lenore."

This explanation appeared to appease the feelings of Lenore; and as for the Carmine Bud, she was so occupied in studying the beautiful creature that she forgot to associate it with the old legend. Still she had heard what the others said.

The boat had now reached the shore, simultaneously with many others. Here another event occurred which unsettled still more the minds of Lenore and Losmega. Just as they had embarked and reached the platform of the wharf, from another boat, which had moored beside the "Albatross," there stepped a gentleman and lady of very distinguished appearance. They walked toward the marble terraces under the brilliant light of the circle of jet, when Lenore and Losmega came up abreast of them. As they did so, Lenore's eyes caught the eyes of the stranger. There was something in his gaze that caused her to tremble, and though she immediately turned away, the eyes of the unknown man followed her with unmistakable fascination. He was a man of fine stature, royal bearing, and intellectual presence. He was richly dressed and showed the evidences of wealth. His outside garment was a deep purple mantle or tunic, fastened with gold clasps which were now loosened, and disclosed a strangely brilliant sash of gorgeous red, running over the right shoulder and under the left. Suspended from the front of the sash was a peculiarly shaped instrument, about five inches long, with a precious stone for the centre-piece. This instrument was capped with gold and had a sharp, diamond-like point at the lower end. His eyes were black and singularly magnetic. Their expression was imperial and commanding. His countenance had the

effect of having been long disciplined to habits of immobility, while his stately carriage and dignified foreign bearing could not fail to make a marked impression on all who came under his influence. He was known as Elandos, "The Sage of the Crimson Sash." The fair and comely lady at his side seemed to be dressed in the apparel of a bride, elegantly and handsomely. She appeared somewhat ill at ease after her companion's long gaze at the stranger.

Losmega, Lenore, and Hita had walked rapidly, and were soon far in advance of the other pair, who appeared now to engage in happy conversation.

CHAPTER II.

THE TEMPLE OF ETIS—LENORE AND LOSMEGA—THEY CONSULT THE ORACLE.

THE temple of Etis was perhaps the chief ornament of Petoséga, with possibly the exception of their assembly amphitheatre, or Pnyx. It was built by the unanimous contribution of all the inhabitants of the city, and it was the sacred home of all the Petoségans. With the city's population of millions, among whom was enormous wealth, it may easily be imagined how beautiful and imposing this structure was. It was the pride of all the devotees of the goddesses. This splendid edifice was situated at the foot of the eastern verge of the Calla grove, and towered above in magnificent dignity. It was built of fine, light stone, and was famed through all this region, and thousands came from other states to see it. It is a tradition that hundreds of years were spent in its construction. It was nearly four hundred feet in length, and two hundred and fifty in breadth, supplied with three hundred marble pillars, one hundred and sixty feet high. Half of them were most elaborately carved, while the others were finished in finest polish. The great dome was an elongated hemisphere, supported by immense half-meridian arches. All the great sculptors and artists had dedicated their best talent and skill to the temple. The altar of the goddess was of great beauty. Unlike most of the shrines of the time, the

temple of Etis was not an asylum for culprits or criminals. Justice was meted out by an intricate system of jurisprudence. The statue of the goddess was very fine, large, and beautifully proportioned. An olive crown was placed at her feet every day by the priestesses. The great figure of a beautiful Albatross in marble, with outspread wings, was perched a little to the right of her.

Losmega was in the ecstasy of deepest love as he left his promised bride and repaired to his own palace. When he reached his home and was alone, the albatross incident magnified itself into a serious matter. What he had so philosophically and easily explained to the fair Lenore, now became a subject of great anxiety. His happiness seemed too perfect to endure. Such joy must come to an end, he thought. He threw himself upon a divan and fell into a sad reverie, which finally merged into fitful dreams, and it was far into the night when the watchman who paced the halls awakened him.

It was late next morning when he arose. The bright sunshine, the smooth Selenella which he saw from his window, the cheerful songs of the birds, all tended to raise his spirits ; but he was depressed still, and after his morning meal determined to see Lenore.

"Dearest Losmega," said the lovely woman as he appeared, "I am so glad thou hast come. Thou wilt think me foolish, but I have been much troubled over the events of last evening. Thy explanation made me more cheerful, but after thou hadst gone I became gloomy."

"And I, too, have been depressed," said Losmega, trying to speak cheerfully ; "and I have thought we might find better satisfaction in consulting the oracle, so I came to ask thee to go with me to the temple of Etis."

"Excellent, excellent, my Losmega, we will go," said Lenore, joyously. "It will be made plain ; I am sure it will."

So saying, they proceeded to the shrine of the goddess, and communicated their desires to the priestess in attendance. She consented to try and obtain an answer to their request by first making an offering and then fervently beseeching the goddess. She threw herself at the feet of the statue, with her hands upon the shrine, and uttered an unintelligible prayer. At the same time her face began to grow pale, her form to tremble, her hair to become dishevelled ; her eyes had a wild, entreating look, and she swayed to and fro as if in agony. Then a quick, whistling wind passed through the halls, and after a moment returned, seeming to hover around the statue in circling, but not in violent currents.

After a few minutes of silence the priestess began to utter hysterically rhythmic sentences, but so jumbled and indistinct that neither Losmega nor Lenore could attach any sense to them. Finally the currents grew quieter, the priestess ceased her unintelligible language, and, apparently from the lips of the goddess herself, came the words, clear, distinct, and full of meaning :

" From its rocks and gloomy caverns,
While the ages roll away,
The white-plumed bird, the Albatross,
Shall with them ever stay."

This oracle seemed to both Lenore and Losmega to settle the incident in a favorable and cheerful way. This could not be ambiguous or equivocal in its nature ; for as long as their national bird never departed from its loved haunts, their cherished city was safe, and good

fortune would ever smile upon it. So the lovers left the temple in the conviction that the interpretation of the oracle was a happy one, little dreaming that there might be another meaning, and still less dreaming that they had missed all its significance.

CHAPTER III.

ELANDOS, THE SAGE OF THE CRIMSON SASH—HIS CHARACTER.

It is now our purpose to unfold the character of Elandos, the Zoatian, from the powerful nation of Zoatia, in the Mosesta Sea, now called the South Pacific. Elandos was the heir-apparent to the throne of Zoatia, and royal high-priest of the national divinity, the goddess Belmeth. He had incurred the severe displeasure of the then reigning sovereign, his father, and was forever debarred from wearing the crown of royalty. But he was still high-priest of the goddess Belmeth, though he could not exercise the great function within the boundaries of his country. Thus left without a fatherland, and bereft of inherited honors, he had visited almost every nation and clime. For consolation in these misfortunes he had studied deeply into the lore of his science, the boastful science of the stars, the bold profession of the magician. He had passed through the prime of youth in this profound devotion to his chosen art, and had allowed his affections to become enslaved to it. These processes had dwarfed and stifled the sense of love. This man had hoped to find in magic a panacea for the ills of destiny; but while sojourning in northern Europe, he met a noble, charming woman whom he wooed and won, and now they had come to the far-famed city of Petoséga to have the formal nuptial service performed

and here spend the days of their young love. This passion had seemed to lessen the devotion of Elandos to his dark science. It was only the day before our moonlight scene that Elandos and his betrothed bride had come to Petoséga, and the nuptial ceremony was to take place immediately upon the arrival of a priest from Zoatia, a particular friend of Elandos, whom he had especially selected for this honor.

Alas for the frailty of human fidelity, for pledged devotion and everlasting constancy! Even now a great revolution was in process in the dark Zoatian's nature. From the moment that his bold eyes rested upon the exquisite face and form of Lenore, a deep and almost uncontrollable frenzy of love seized him. Aversion for the woman at his side took the place of the love he had pledged her. Indeed, his love at this very moment was already half transplanted by hate.

But for the remainder of the walk that evening he used that perfect tact and dissimulation, that concealment of real feeling, which is characteristic of the devotees of magic.

He accompanied his betrothed bride to her palace in the city, then returned to his own mansion, an elegant structure, that overlooked the Selenella. He took a seat in the library—a man in whose heart the most unbridled passions were warring, like forces that, contending for the first time, fight violently and blindly, without system or purpose; and in this tossed condition of mind he betook himself to rest for the night.

As the first white streaks of day appeared, the Zoatian was seated, restless, sleepless, and alone, in the topmost part of the lofty tower, which was on the corner facing the bay. A rampart, or slight parapet, served as a wall,

which, with the height of the building, the thick, impenetrable foliage of spruce and olive, gave it a secluded and isolated appearance, and made observation impossible. On a small oval table, made of petrified wood, there was an unrolled scroll, covered with mystic characters. He sat at the end, leaning pensively on his right elbow, and now peering far into the heavens, which were filled with waning and fading stars, as the shades of night were paling in the struggle with the dawn. Here he sat and studied, while far out over the deep sea the silent march of the morning was stealing.

It was in this quiet, early hour that the daring Zoatian found the most successful time for making the calculations of fate and unfolding human destiny by the stars.

He had read his monitors, the results had been written on the scroll, and he was now musing over their prophecy with a thoughtful but joyous expression upon his dark and handsome face. And after a moment more of meditation, he broke forth in a happy strain of thought, his countenance undergoing various pleasing changes.

"Elandos, thou art well starred!" he exclaimed at last. "They wear a joyous look that seems reluctant to fade away; their light is bright, steady, constant; their appearance is not hostile, but friendly; they seem to beckon to me with outstretched hands, holding the joys of the future; sometimes they have appeared reproachful, censorious, mocking; but now they show no menace, as they did to the fated Orestes or the soothsayer of Agamemnon. They promise me dominion, thrones, rewards of ambition. They tell me that the usurper shall lose the stolen diadems, that the courts of the Palangwa shall welcome back their heir-apparent; that the ancient wrongs shall be avenged; that the lost joys of youth

shall be restored, and no Tantalus toil or thirst to make hard the way. 'Fear not,' say the prophetic orbs, 'the deep sea, the threatening heaven, the pinch of law, the barbarian lance, or the sword of war.' Far into their deepest depths I can peer, and I see no concealed censor of destiny for me. My hour-glass has in it no deep rifts or gulfs, but an even surface of shining, sparkling sand. Bright now is my career as the bosom of yonder moonlit sea. Ye have at last come to my rescue; your favorite son shall not be exiled longer, and shorn of life's great dues. Nowhere is there a glimmer of defeat; but the devoted stars carpet anew with gold the pathway of my destiny."

The Sage of the Crimson Sash, after he had concluded this happy flow of his thoughts, unconsciously rose from his chair, for this joyous vision of the future was clouded by his present perplexities, which caused him to pace rapidly and nervously the narrow, round space of the observatory.

"But will the stars," he resumed again after a thoughtful pause, "will they support me in my great desire?" and he looked searchingly into the faces of the fast-fading stars, as he stepped meditatively from one column to another of the parapet. He fell now into a silent and absorbing attitude, conning over in his mind, aye, on this very eve of the bridal day, how he should make the ceremony exquisite—ah! no; but how should he proceed to rid himself of a now hated object, and gain the possession of one that filled all his existence? His eyes wandered over the beautiful expanse below: there, great and tranquil, lay the olive-green Sclenella, and far around the bay rose the rigging of the pleasure galleys of beautiful design and color, and, eclipsing far the others, the

stately "Albatross" of Losmega. Still, now, was the gay pleasure sea ; no face of divine beauty was anywhere to be seen ; no rippling peal of angelic sweetness ; the human element was gone ; his eye ran over that point of the landing where, the night before, the divine beauty of Lenore had unmanned him ; and he grew weak and unnerved as he thought that even all his skill of magic might not avail with so pure and sweet a woman.

The gay-colored flags and streamers, slightly tossed by the idle breeze, harmonized picturesquely with the rosy tints of the east, and impressing one how far the mysterious mechanism of nature transcends the handiwork of man. The gray mist hung over the great white terraces, under the still moon, in the utter silence of the human world, while the great sapphire wall and garden were the majestic environment. The huge amber squares, with the twilight scenes, were the very gates to some eternal palace. The garden itself was an Eden where the nymphs were stooping above each flower, and lifting from them the veil of gauzy vapor which they had thrown over them against the shades of night. Everywhere was life inanimate. Far toward the north-east ran the long interminable streets which, with the thousands of columns on each side of vari-colored circles of jets, made the thoroughfares seem as if margined with worlds of light ; and further yet was the centre of the great metropolis ; and the very heart of it was the amphitheatre, the Petoségan Pnyx, whose great golden dome was a very world of gold hung in mid-air.

Far out the broad Lossa stretched, serene and tideless, its slight undulations the breathings of its powerful sleep, while its moss-green surface in the dim distance followed the green and beautiful curves of the angular shores of

the "Blessed Isles." Jewels they were, set gorgeously in the vast waters ; and the superb temples of the three goddesses shone finely across the liquid leagues, nestling serenely in the luxuriant foliage of the trees.

"Magnificence fit to enrapture the gods !" exclaimed the Zoatian, as the calm survey he had made stirred up his thoughts anew. "Oh, ye Petoséga, jewel art thou of all earth's cities ; and thou, Lossa, excelleth the oceans of the world."

Then with a little melancholy he continued :

"Fair, too, is my own Zoatia in the far Mosetta, whose murmur is sweet to me even in exile, as I think of childhood's hour spent on thy pearl-curved strand. Cursed be the destiny that drives me from my country's stars, my throne, my palaces, and my vales and seas. Hurled are the joys and blessings from my grasp. That upstart lineage drives the ancestral line to strange and unknown climes. Must I see a foreign race deck his brow with the Kormath opals, and his barbarian steeds wear the bridles of Zoatian chargers, and the purple of my fathers wrapped about his thieving shoulders ?" and the dark eyes of Elandos grew black with hate and rage.

"May the savage hordes of the Monhegans drive thee from my throne, and dye thy robe of death in the blood of thy veins ! By Belmeth, I curse thee and thy offspring forever !"

As the sage uttered this malediction, he lay back in his chair, his left hand clenched, the right outstretched, his cheeks pale with anger,—an image of hatred and evil determination. His dark eyes sparkled with a savage gladness that comes from the thoughts of some revenge.

He turned his gaze now from the sea and city, and his

eyes rested on the range of hills which was crowned by the magnificent Calla grove.

Difficult it was to find a reason why that superb stretch of elevated terraced-like hills, glorious with every kind of tree and flower and clustered vine, with birds in bowers of song, was once a battle-ground, where the gods of earth and heaven fought; difficult to see where the great Thor had battered the monsters into powder, unless it was that the great wide plain on which the city stood was beaten flat by the tramp of the mighty hosts of the thunder-god.

The high-priest and magician, so long skilled in magic and strange usages, was now intent upon finding some witch, or hadö, which was the generic term in Zoatia, to aid him in his work of ridding himself of Zellota, and of winning, by fair means or foul, the goddess-like stranger. From his long association with these weird beings he knew what places they frequented, what grotesque caverns were their homes. So the peering eyes of Elandos, now that the stars had foretold his future fortune, were in search of a menial assistant, and he gazed in that direction where he thought would most likely be the haunt of these queer hags. He was yet unacquainted with the city, for it is only a day since he came; but he thought that in the early gray of the morning, when they cull their herbs and make their unholy visitations and accursed incantations, he might perchance spy one of them. So he looked across where the hills sloped to a level surface, and a low, wet marsh, with here and there a treacherous pool, stretched away in the distance.

"Yea, yea!" he exclaimed in a tone of delight, after he had anxiously gazed for a few moments, "there is one

of my tribe abroad in search of the secrets of Nature and reading the lore of the moon—there ! she is mutely watching something in the dark water. Verily, I have read the course of the stars aright : they do favor me, and even point out to me a servant and a hado. She must be seen swiftly, and weave for me the web of my elevation, my triumph, and my happiness." With this last he fell again into the chair in a profound meditation ; for whenever he thought of designs against Zellota, his bride, he was terribly moved and overcome—the conscience working in him. Then he paced rapidly the curved railing, and drew up his stately form in all the attitude of pride, as if in the moment of triumph.

Elandos was one of those commanding characters which, rising high, stand above the multitudes of their age ; he was the superior intellect, the directing force who could understand them as the infinite does the finite ; he would be noticed in any vast throng or assemblage. His mind was transcendent, and outbalanced, even from youth, the qualities of his heart. His thought, his bearing, his action, his conversation,—all showed the arbitrary power of his intellect. A crown was his heritage, but a cruel fate deprived him of it ; the high-priest of his fatherland, he could no longer there perform the holy rites of Belmeth. Now, he was forever an exile from his loved country, without the slightest chance of return or restoration. His father had suffered death at the hands of the incoming dynasty ; and indeed all his kin had been the victims of the usurper's brutality. Proud and haughty, he of all his race escaped, without a clime, a land, a crown. His pride made him restless, and he was stung to thoughts of revenge. Hate had burned from his heart the finer strains of passion, caused

by his inexorable destiny. Stern by nature, proud by natural mould, cold misfortune had so deepened those lines and expressions, that it was only the forced smile that lighted his countenance. All the promising hopes of his youth he was bereft of, excepting immense wealth. The disagreement and strife with his father, the years of struggle with the invader, the final fatal end and loss of all his race, country, and throne, had wasted away the period of early manhood; and now, at more than forty years, he found himself possessed of nothing but sordid riches. Once the romantic in his nature was strong. The heart's mould was rich, varied, and plentiful. But the refining fires of all these years had robbed him of the heroic period—the romantic period of every budding manhood, which he saw enjoyed by the young noblemen around him. He felt that the golden age of his life had been ruthlessly supplanted by the iron and the leaden, and all against his vain struggles. The lapse of years had softened somewhat the burning fires of revenge, and the wooing and winning of Zellota served yet more to draw a veil of oblivion over the past, and put out entirely the fires of his volcanic nature. But, like Vesuvius, though its fires were believed to have ceased forever, yet, after centuries of smouldering anger, broke forth anew with tenfold vigor, so the sleeping pride and hopes of revenge and retrieval of his heritages seized him with overwhelming fury and reckless determination, from the night the "Albatross" landed her fair freight in the harbor of Selenella.

Schooled in the arts of his abstruse science, the naturally dark imagination of Elandos augmented that early training, and but for the short time of his awakened love for Zellota, he had nursed that solitary habit of his mind.

Now a new and daring ambition beckoned him to a still deeper acquaintance and more useful practice of the mysterious traditions. He had at heart little faith in the gods ; he even questioned their existence ; but he had absolute faith in the infinity of human wisdom. He firmly believed that Nature imposed no limit to the discovery of her secrets. He believed that all human power is measured by man's understanding of nature, and is proportionate to it. The superior minds, he thought, by reason of that supremacy, were privileged to come closer to her great heart. The master souls might even unlock all the doors of her treasure-house and obtain from her her very power. The cultivation of magic has existed from time immemorial, and its mystic devotees and masters have awed potentates, princes, and kings. Not the least formidable was the exiled high-priest of the colleges of ancient Zoatia, Elandos, the dark and swarthy magician. He had achieved the greatest distinction of any of his country's masters of the sacred science, and gained a fame far above all his predecessors, for his insight into the heart of nature, for his prophetic power and the majesty of his mind. He went so far as to say that the intellect made all laws for human action ; intellectuality, not morality, should be the basis of act and deed. The mind knew no condition of right and wrong ; these limitations he left to the vulgar herd, who had heart enough, but lacked the high orders of intellect. Man has power over that which he can create ; so, so far as his mind may extend over the realm of nature, man's will sets up the standard, or absolute rule of action, which is above the criticism of the foolish masses. He scorned the mind below his own. Such was his philosophy.

As the years passed on, and the wildest and most extravagant hopes of driving from the throne the usurping king faded inevitably away, hatred and scorn of regal power and rule over the multitude sank deep into his soul. Contempt for the purple robes of royalty seized him with greater intensity with each succeeding year. His existence in the main for years had been in the nursing of the most dark and savage feelings, and the practice of the obscure art. He had travelled from clime to clime, always seclusive, and drawing around him none but intellectual characters, excepting the menial hags who were his slaves. This wandering, exiled life, with contempt for all living things but mental force, he had followed uninterruptedly till within a year of his entrance in Petoséga, the day preceding the afternoon of the excursion on the Selenella. The lovely Zellota brought a new element into his life, and he began to think the sentimental fires of youth had not been all burned out by rage and hate. The newly-kindled love was now softening the cynicism and contempt, and the humanities were being revived in his soul. To what perfection this attempt to form an old character anew would have gone had the conditions been given, cannot be known. It might have reached a well-rounded and harmonious whole.

But he was carried away in a whirlwind of passion and revenge, and his boasted brilliance of mind was not able to rescue him ere he reached the goal of retribution. In the saintly and beautiful Lenore he saw that ideal woman who ought to have been the bride of his young days, the prize of his youthful manhood ; that woman, that only woman who would have been the fit consort of his life ; but now he had passed that pristine day when,

with all his royalty and priesthood, he could have had for his queen the noblest of the earth. His youth had forever fled, and he was too far along to claim now the fairest of women. Zellota, though good, lovely, noble, was not his ideal. He was now ready to use his philosophy, which placed wisdom above right and wrong, and the mysteries of his dark art, and any means his proud intellect could devise, to have, to possess, the heart, the soul, the beauty of Lenore.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SAGE OF THE CRIMSON SASH—THE WITCH'S HEATH
—THE WITCH OF THE BURNING BUSH—THE APPA-
RENT SMILE OF FATE.

AFTER the long communion with the stars, the spasms of longing, and the excitement of expectation, the Zoatian, betaking himself to a couch, easily fell asleep. It was almost noon when he awoke.

Then, after a slight breakfast, he set out to find the witch of the Burning Bush. He passed around the eastern edge of the Calla grove and down the decline to a level plain, which was overgrown with cypress and vines. After winding through a dense thicket he came to an open space, bare and burned, as if by a shower of coals, which extended up to the foot of a rocky, precipitous range of hills. Half way up the rugged height he perceived a cavern. About it there were vast boulders, huge and crag-like, great splinters of rock, as if they had been hurled into a thousand pieces by the immortal thunder-god. As he drew nearer, he observed that the mouth of the cavern had been curiously rent. Tremendous seams ran in every direction, the interstices being filled with rank weeds and ugly underbrush.

A few paces below the mouth of the cave, and situated just on the edge of the barren plain, was a scraggy bush, some eight feet in height. It presented a strange appearance, for it seemed alive. The leaves were ser-

rated, and oval in shape. The slight breeze that was blowing affected the tree in a strange manner. The leaves grew bright and red with flame. When the wind subsided the tree seemed a dark, smoky, cinderfied color, like a fire burned out.

The magician made his way as best he could on this strange path and stranger mission. Around him were the evidences anew of the powerful destructive forces of nature, and he felt a little tremor pass over him as he realized that his own heart was full of vengeance; but the figure of Lenore coming before him drove instantly away the intruding conscience.

As he crossed the rough stone slab that marked the threshold of the cavern, a foul-winged harpy suddenly appeared from the darkness and uttered a ghastly, blood-curdling cry, half human, half devilish, that startled even the wizard Elandos. At the side of one of the walls burned a fire over which was a black caldron, and on a low, rude post burned an oil lamp from which came an unsteady and flickering light. The walls were hung with various knots of weeds, in all stages of preservation. On a pile of dry leaves, in a perfect coil, lay a huge spotted viper, and in the deep shadows of the lamp, with its head upon its tail, lay an immense, grisly cat. Opposite the fire and near the other wall was a rude column of clay, some four feet high, with mysterious characters upon it, and on its narrowed top was placed the ghastly visage of a human skeleton. The usual tripod of Hecate stood at the entrance.

But the object that most fearfully startled the senses of the beholder was the ghoulish form of a human being, who, though on earth, seemed to belong more to the regions of the damned. At the side of the fire sat a

woman of advanced age, and on her countenance played alternately the light and the shadow. As the extreme of beauty draws hearts to it like magic, so the extreme of ugliness fascinates even while it appalls. The eyes had a glazed, expressionless stare, which reminded one of the embryonic state of the eye in long cycles past, when sight and vision were not yet its attributes. The lips were shrunken and of a sickly blue; the long green-gray hair, like sea-grass, bleached and colorless, the greenish-yellow skin, as if a grave had been robbed to clothe a human form, were enough to appall the strongest heart; but the Sage of the Crimson Sash, accustomed to such creatures, was not particularly moved.

"Silence, menial!" she exclaimed to the harpy as the Zoatian approached, and it became mute and quiet, but continued to glare from its perch in the darkness, to which it had retreated.

"Rise, slave of dim night and the shades of Orcus," said Elandos, in a tone of haughty superiority, "arise and salute the master soul of thy art."

"Who art thou?" the hag inquired, without moving. "The hado of the Petoségan hills salutes not the unknown."

"I am he whom the devotees of magic honor and adore, the world around," answered Elandos.

"Can it be that thou art the Sage of the Crimson Sash, whose high-priesthood has gone abroad in the earth?"

"Behold! I am he," replied the magician. "I am Elandos, the Sage of the Crimson Sash, from the fair Zoatia in the far Mosesta."

As he spoke he drew aside the folds of his robe and disclosed the deep crimson sash fastened with a clasp of

gold, and pendent from it the mysterious opal instrument. At this indubitable evidence of his character the witch threw herself humbly at his feet.

"Thanks be to the lone stars," she said, "I have seen the high-priest of Zoatia, and greet him, and am his willing slave."

"Look and listen," the Zoatian replied, patronizingly. "Thou must be an agent in the execution of a plan which I will unfold to thee."

The hado fell back in her accustomed seat, and Elanodos placed himself beside her.

"Thou art skilled, I know," he began, "in all the deadly herbs, as well as the sweet elixirs, and can concoct those potions that seem to elevate the soul to joy divine. Now, by the mighty Belmeth, I swear that I will blast thee into mortal fragments as fine as those at thy rocky entrance, if thou breakest to the dead or the living the secrets I shall disclose to thee."

The hado turned pale at this terrible vow and the superhuman glare in the eyes of the Zoatian, and fell in token of utmost fidelity at his feet.

"Great Sage, I vow eternal silence; and may the everlasting fires scorch my temples if I break faith with thee. Little, O prince, is my knowledge of the mysteries of Nature and the dark magic stored in her herbs, and I am nothing before thy boundless wisdom. But speak, and my weak hands shall aid thee."

"Hark and heed," said the prince, still compelling the hag's attention with his artful eyes; "there is a betrothed whom I fancied I loved, but now I hate. A priest of Belmeth will come ere long to perform the mystic rites of Zellota. This must not come to pass. My youth could have had the peerless among women; that, mis-

fortune denied me. Now cometh my revenge. The woman I covet is at hand: and listen, the obstacles foolish moments have brought must be cleared from my pathway. And know thou that that which would be, must not be, and that which would not be, must be. A goddess in human form is to be mine."

"Thy servant, thy slave will ever aid thee," interrupted the hado.

"Listen and obey. The priest that cometh and the woman that dreameth of Hymen, must number their days on the half of one hand's fingers. The priest must first meet his doom. When he reacheth the city, I will bring him to thy cavern, for us both to be refreshed by thy draughts. Then do thou prepare two phials, one of deadly poison, the other of exhilarating fluid; the venom for him, the sweet liquid for thy lord. But on our first visit give us both of the pleasing draught, that it may create the unerring opportunity. When these human obstructions to my ambition are swept aside, then will come thy reward. And more, thy love-philters, too, must bring this fair being to my heart's love. Then shalt thou have thy well-earned meed."

"Mighty Elandos," said the witch, "I admonish thee to judgment in the pursuit of thy ambition, and warn thee to prudence in thy vengeance. Petoségan laws have vigilant eyes, and thy servant, detected in disregard, would fall into heavy penalty. So by the moon, let thy large caution, I pray thee, weigh well with thee for thy servant's sake."

"Wise hado," replied the Zoatian, "thou hast much wisdom; and thy prudence excelleth thy race."

"The lore of the pale moon," continued the witch, "methinks prophesies well for thee: and lo, what doth

the burning caldron say?"—now she raised herself up and stood for a moment looking into the boiling mixture, her eyes the while taking a dreamy look. "I see the figure of good fortune with smiling countenance;" then, in a sort of trance, she uttered this metrical prophecy:

"Elandos of the far Mosetta!
The magic of the moon and stars
Shall come to aid their earthly lord,
And joined with him in one accord
Shall put to rout the wily Mars.
* * * * *
The seasons roll; o'er earth and sea
The one thou lov'st shall follow thee."

"A purse of gold for thy fair prediction," said Elandos, and he threw one, heavily filled, beside her. "In the shades of night we shall meet again. Remember, and farewell; and for thy lease of life thou shalt have added to thy already lengthened career half the span of Alpha Centauri, and thy destiny shall be written on the disc of the pale stars. Remember, and farewell."

The witch of the Burning Bush followed her guest to the threshold, and looked long after the retreating form. Well might that gloomy mouth of the cavern have appeared the entrance to the dreary abode of Orcus and Acheron, with its overhanging rocks blasted by the thunderbolts into a thousand forms and covered with the blackness of hell's sulphurous blasts.

CHAPTER V.

THE OVERTURNED CARRIAGE—THE ZOATIAN BEGINS THE LADDER OF HOPE ON GOLDEN ROUNDS.

THE next morning "the sea-fogs pitched their tents in the eastern gray," as one of our loved poets has sung, and ranged their camps in military precision along the Petoségan hills, on the broad expanse of the city and the sweeping area of the ocean. When they lifted they were like a vast array of vertical pillars or flat columns of grayish color moving slowly upward. Far away, as these upright shafts of mist noiselessly disappeared in the heavens, it seemed like the vast and sublime retreat of the hosts of the immortals.

As the warm, unobstructed beams came down in prodigal light, the coy choristers in their leafy lodges broke forth in joyous harmony. The sweet-voiced lark—unheard in cheerless day—now sings in happy song as it mounts the clearing heavens. The majestic Albatross flew along the beach. It is the most beautiful of birds as it floats on its soft pinions through the air—the figure of grace—its long snowy plumes never fluttering; while in sunshine or storm its motion is sweeping and steady, a slight turn of its arrowy wing serving to change its course. Beautiful and graceful it proudly mounts the highest heaven, the strongest blast never deflecting its way, as side by side with the fastest ship at sea it soars with sublime ease. The tranquil, marble-like air

it delights in, and its velvety pinions, bear it gently aloft. It loves to quarrel with the storm, and darts into the blackest sky swift as a meteor seen in the autumn night. As it begins its flight, it makes a few long, rapid, sweeping motions, then expands its wings to a horizontal position, and thus motionless flies on almost forever. This mysterious energy enables it to make the long, distant flights across the trackless seas.

Losmega, as he descended the steps of his palace, was a fine specimen of sinewy form, and he looked fit to be a Ganymede. He stopped in the court of blooming flowers, and from a crescent bed picked a handful of moss-roses. How beautiful is this fable of the moss-rose! The tradition is that the fairy queen of the flowery kingdom, wafted to sleep in the fragrant shade of the rose, threw around it as her parting grace a veil of moss. And there is another not less pretty one—that in a war of the flowers and brambles, the roses were fast losing their blushing petal armor, when their guardian angel appeared, and threw the rest in a veil of cloud. Losmega took some of each and presented them to Lenore, who placed them side by side of the Eretta.

Thus the morning of the next day was beautiful beyond description, and it made the heart of Losmega very happy as he rose and looked from the window upon the beauty and serenity of the day. The odors of the rose and jasmine stole into his library on the breath of the wind. The sparkling points of the sapphire wall glittered in the sunlight,—all had the touch and softness of a perfect summer day.

"What wonderful beauty," said Losmega. "The ever-propitious Etis thus favors our pleasure ride." So saying

he ordered the slave to bring a few simple things for the morning meal, and he himself prepared his toilet.

Simultaneously with these happy thoughts of Losmega, Lenore was peering from her window far down the Avenue Rosetta, to see what were the promises of the dawn. The first anxious look passed quickly into a joyous expression as she saw the loveliness of the day. She hastened to assist her mother to make ready for the journey; and everything else done, she arrayed herself in a beautiful creamy gown, the ornamented puffs and drapery being of pale blue. Her hair was arranged in a Greek coil. The last addition to her toilet was the potent girdle that once enamoured the gods.

There were a number of conveyances in use in that day, the gorgeous war chariot, the palatial car, the easy vehicle for the aged and invalid. The pleasure carriage was large and spacious, with four wheels, provided with a canopy, and well balanced on elastic springs. In one of these the lovers, with Lenore's mother, began their excursion on the peerless country road, leading east from the city. The wagon was drawn by a pair of strong, muscular, high-strung steeds, dapple gray in color. The Petoségan horses were, indeed, known for beauty, strength, and intelligence. Nothing could exceed the beauty of the day and the harmony of the occasion. No scenery was ever more beautiful, no lover's excursion ever more blissful, but their joy too soon dimmed.

The Zoatian had returned to his home from the cavern in joyous spirits and in certain assurance that the early misfortunes of his youth were soon to be retrieved, that the greatest treasure of the world would be his by the power of magic and human craft, all in the unfolding of

time ; but the strictest vigilance and activity must be observed. Here was the hour of the redemption of his life from ignoble failure, but it rested upon him to use the opportunity. So from the time he left the witch, he had been planning in his mind the action to pursue. Two of his kind must meet death in order that the world's prize could be his—the priest, and Zellota, who once inspired love, now hate. The priest must first be silenced in the unawakening grave ; for as the object of his visit to the city was to perform the nuptial service of himself and Zellota, if it should be given up, and the expectant bride be missing, it would doubtless be a serious obstacle to the silence of crime and the safety of the Zoatian. For this was in the days when the sacred colleges of Belmeth sent into the world to crown her altars ministers who were men of noble character and the soul of honor. So, then, the priest must first be taken off. In the meantime, until his arrival and destruction, it is necessary for Elandos to preserve toward Zellota a loving demeanor and show her every possible indication of devotion, affection, and love, that she suspect nothing, and so carry no suspicions to her fatherly protector, the Belmeth priest. He had already displayed this dissimulation, a conspicuous feature of his character.

This morning, shortly after the lovers departed on their drive, the Crimson Sash, preparing himself in faultless robe, sandals, and blue turban, set out for the house of his bride. He stopped and picked some asphodel and jasmine as he passed, and halted a moment to arrange them prettily, smelling of their sweet fragrance, and suddenly holding them aside with an absent look, as if an invisible voice was struggling with this hypocrisy of his nature.

These he gave to Zellota, as innocent and unsuspecting as Althea, who mused on the ancient shore of the Ægean, little guessing the perfidy of Theseus. The Zoatian showed her every attention, and the time he spent away from her company, he delicately and lovingly told her, was used in the elaborate preparation of the wedding ceremony, which he wished to make commensurate with his royalty and his wealth, that it needed much time for all the details and success. Nor could the service take place until the arrival of his fellow priest of Belmeth. His manner was so perfectly simulated that detection of unfaithfulness was impossible. So Zellota—such are the terrible happenings of life, waited in devotion, purity, and innocence, not for a living consort, but for the bridegroom of death !

Meanwhile, the excursion of the lovers was taking place. This driveway was a remarkable one in beauty and grandeur of natural scenery. For eight or nine miles the ground was perfectly level, and had been covered with a hard, unyielding substance peculiar to the arts of the Petoségans ; it was also showered with asbestos, making a most smooth and delightful surface. The greatest care was taken with it, for it was the great pleasure thoroughfare of the nation. It was a double drive for nearly nine miles, a little part of which may be seen yet, extending to the wonderful Sanfeldo, one of the mountains of the range of Astasios. It is in the form of Cassiopeia, that constellation seen in the Milky Way ; or, in other words, is like the figure of a chair inverted or lying upon its back, zigzagging at the distance of miles, and ending in the form of a diamond at the base of the mountain.

The thoroughfare was bordered by beautiful trees

arching into delightful shade. Wild flowers of great beauty and form grew profusely on each side, and the fantastic veils of flitting shadows across their faces created a dreamy effect like strains of silent music.

The birds of this clime were among the richest in song, and gorgeous in color. The genial clime, the unrivalled beauties, the soft air, the perfume of bloom, all drew them here. The mocking-bird was the most charming of the songsters. To listen to its notes and not to description is the only way to have a conception of its enrapturing power. It is the most joyous and happy of the feathered tribe. It is full of mockery, and loves to jest and jeer at the serious and sober of its fellows. So joyous, it sets up a dance to the tune of its own music. It is full of artful ways and coy deceptions. It knows its power, and after a strain of most enchanting warbling, beautiful enough to draw the stars from their orbits to listen, having secured mute attention, it breaks forth suddenly in a most ridiculous medley of the notes of the pigeon, the cuckoo, or the alarm-bird; then, with head aside, it pretends to listen for the music afar off, while it is making most delightful sounds. This exquisite singer never tires, and many times, in the stillness of the night, it pours forth its delicious harmony.

Soon they reached the foot of the mountain, and prepared to go where they could see the wonderful spectre of the Sanfeldo. This is an atmospheric phenomenon of great mystery. The range of the Astasios runs at right angles to the Aveligna (the name of the drive), and at a great distance, bleak and barren, towers the Sanfeldo. Upon the side of this was observed the gigantic spectre. Far to the south-west a brisk wind was blowing and driving before it the thin, transparent sea-fogs, that had

lingered there, being left behind when the others lifted above the city. Losmega and Lenore, by the help of a guide, found the proper elevation from which to view the astonishing sight. They stood still a few moments and looked in the south-west. Soon, far off, a great distance through the crystal air, two colossal human figures were photographed in great distinctness against the towering mountain. All the movements that each or either made were imitated exactly by the far-away spectre, the bent form, the lifted hand, the bowed figure. What a feeling of awful grandeur and startling mystery these gigantic statues, a thousand feet high, thrown against a misty background, animated with life, mocking with a ghostly, solemn weirdness human action, created !

Lenore's mother was unable to make the ascent ; but she had seen it in years ago with her own lover, the father of Lenore, and she occupied herself meanwhile in reading the "Romance of the Gualpuelli," a piece of fiction very popular at that time.

The lovers came to the carriage and reported the wonderful sight, and after a moment of discussion upon it, started to see an almost equally celebrated phenomenon of those days, the bird-shrine and whirling fountain, situated on the broken, rocky range north of the San-feldo. They reached the place by winding around crags and piles of torn rock, and by the help of a guide. There was an enormous basin or extinct crater a hundred fathoms deep in the centre, being less at the rim. This was filled with water that whirled with awful fierceness, the tremendous volumes constantly forming near the edges revolving with frightful rapidity, and rushing with great vehemence to the centre from all sides ; and by the enormous concussion of these seas of water, a mighty

column is sent hundreds of feet into the air, falling constantly in a beautiful spray. The edges of the crater are dished like a saucer, and a level space surrounds the outside. Here the birds of almost all climes were wont to frequent, and any time when the multitude were there it presented an array of color, form, and size of the bird-world rare to behold. Lenore and Losmega, having viewed these wonders, returned again to the carriage.

On their way back they had reached the suburbs of the city, when a mounted messenger rode hastily up by the side of the carriage, and with a dignified greeting, spoke in decisive but courteous tones.

"Am I permitted to salute the noble Losmega?" he said, evidently guessing his identity by description, for Losmega had not been long enough in the capital to become generally known.

"I am Losmega," was the answer; "pray state thy errand." The slight excitement on the young man's face showed that he already knew the cause of the messenger's approach.

"I come only by the command of the high Selthon of the city, who, an hour ago, called together the judges in secret council to consider the high charge of treason against Rosmetos. Thy absence, I am commanded to say, delays the council, and the Selthon asks thy instant presence." This message delivered, the deputy turned and dashed away in the direction of the city.

So strict were the laws of Petoséga in regard to attendance upon the courts, that voluntary absence after summons met severe censure, if not punishment. Because of this the metropolis was famous for governmental and judicial exactness.

"Go at once, my dear Losmega," said Lenore, per-

ceiving that her companion wavered between duty and inclination ; " I am used to the steeds, have driven them before many times, and we are not far from home. So leave me to my horsemanship, and see that thou act well thy part of judge ; " and with a pull of the reins and a bewitching gesture, the carriage rolled away.

The horses sped down the beautiful Avenue Remelso in their finest style. The gentle breeze deepened the rosy tint of the fair driver's cheeks, and brought new life to the pale countenance of her mother. All went well for a time ; but as the horses turned at the intersection of this thoroughfare with the Avenue Rosetta, they suddenly shied and the carriage was thrown violently upon its side. Lenore was unhurt, but her companion seemed very seriously injured. It was all done in an instant. The horses dashed on, while Lenore stood looking anxiously about for assistance. Her mother lay speechless and almost without life. Close by the intersection of streets, and in full sight of the spot where the accident happened, was situated the mansion of the Zoatian. He had returned but a short time before from his visit to Zellota, and was now walking about among the flowers and shrubbery of the court.

" The spell begins to work," the magician told himself with a chuckle of fiendish joy, as he caught sight of Lenore leaning over the prostrate form of her mother. " The gods, too, have decreed success. Blessed be the gods."

In another moment his fleet steps had borne him to her side. Lenore recognized him as the stranger she and Losmega had passed on the landing ; but she was grateful for help now, and bravely put aside her dislike.

Elandos quickly summoned a litter and slaves, and

Lenore's mother was borne carefully to her home. He also ordered a physician, and acted well the part of a sympathetic gentleman. Innocent Lenore wrote a message to Losmega and requested the Zoatian to dispatch it by one of his slaves. Elandos gave all the assistance possible, while Lenore, exceedingly grateful for his timely help and judicious advice, warmly expressed her thanks, and gave him her hand at parting.

The Zoatian sought his home in high spirits, and thus communed with himself :

"Hail ! hail ! is not this the dawn of retribution ? What plainer prophecy than this is needed ? To oblivion be consigned the past. The stars will fight their master's cause. They will tell his victories one to another and blast his enemies with the lightnings of their wrath. All homage to Belmeth. She will not forsake her chosen.

"Hail ! is not this the beginning of the good fortune I have read in the pale stars ? Did not their lore unfold a glorious destiny ? Has not the hado of the Burning Bush confirmed this prophecy ? Did she not read instantly the metrical prediction in the seething caldron ?" This second sight of her, her words, her presence, stirred up deeper than ever his passion to possess Lenore, and he broke forth again in this soliloquy :

"O woman form, the eternal destinies say that thou shalt be mine. Such as thou has all my youth vainly sought for. Of thee my harsh fate deprived me, and after thrice the circuit of the world, I behold thee—I become thy servant. In thee my golden youth returns, as the lost Atlantis came again to the bosom of the sorrowing Azotus. Thou shalt illumine my soul by thy beauty, thy mind, thy love. Twice queen thou shalt be, the ruler of my heart, and the empress of my southern

throne. My goddess thou, and thou shalt command my soul, my tongue, my life. Thou shalt be my sun, and as the great earth sweeps through the arcs of time by yonder mighty orb, so shall my existence run on forever by thy hallowed light. Divine in beauty, take heart and titles, and hail Mosettan queen !”

Thus exclaimed the Zoatian, his tall form towering in pride and his hands aloft in dramatic gesture ; then he fell back upon the divan couch weakened somewhat from this sudden outburst of rapturous passion.

CHAPTER VI.

HITA'S RETURN—ARRIVAL OF THE PRIEST OF BELMETH— HIS DINNER WITH ELANDOS.

HITA had been absent on a short visit to a dear friend in a neighboring city, and had returned to Petoséga only an hour or two before the pleasure party reached the capital. She hurried down the Avenue Rosetta to see first her dear friend Lenore. She was deeply saddened at the result of the catastrophe, and, sister like, prepared to remain to help, assist, and comfort until the crisis should be passed.

Losmega received Lenore's message and hastened to her side. Her mother had by this time recovered consciousness, and once more a great evil seemed to have been averted.

The great priest of the goddess Belmeth who was to perform the marriage ceremony for the Zoatian arrived on the afternoon of the accident, and after making his way to Zellota's palace and saluting her graciously he hastened, by her direction, to the abode of Elandos.

The Sage met him with a joyous countenance which Hurotas took to be inspired by the approaching consummation of his happiness ; but alas ! what a different emotion swayed the form of the dark Zoatian. If the priest could have peered into the recesses of that heart, how changed would he have found it.

" High-priest of Belmeth, Hurotas, I am glad to see

thee," said Elandos in his most gracious manner. "Rest thyself in yon reclining chair, for the journey of land and sea has borne heavily on thy many years."

"Royal Elandos," replied Hurotas, "it is my highest delight to enjoy the hospitality of the last of the ancient Kormath, and high honor it is to me to be desired by thee to minister at thy marriage vows."

"Of all the votaries of our ancient goddess, thee alone I chose, my noble Hurotas, and I count it most happy that thou canst give thy presence to the joyful occasion. The goddess has granted thy safe passage across the stormy seas, which shows her gracious heart both to thee and me."

Hurotas was aged now, yet the muscular firmness peculiar to his race still displayed itself in his sinewy form. He was of a tall, stately figure, with much grace of motion. His face showed individuality, a pure life, and honesty of action and purpose. His strong, upright character was not the exception among the ancient colleges of Zoatia. The artful or treacherous priest was rare among them. The character of Elandos was a remarkable example of the degeneracy of a votary of Belmeth, but Hurotas had been the counsellor and friend of his youth, which was full of promise of a perfect life. But Elandos having spent so many of his later years in far-away lands, Hurotas was not aware of the change for the worse in his companion's character.

"Petoséga is a wonderful city in beauty and grandeur," continued Elandos. "Nature here is like a mighty kaleidoscope of changing charm and sublimity. The art of this people also is exquisite, and transcends that of any nation I have ever visited. The Lossa is the grandest of all the seas, and here and there upon its broad, placid

surface are islands of heavenly foliage, goddesses of green, which the immortals have placed there to tint forever the seas with emerald. Far toward the west are seen the Blessed Isles, famed as the abode of goddesses, and toward the Arctic north is the rocky isle called Effelda, where nature is wonderfully prodigal, and where tradition and fable speak from every cavern, nook, and glen. This Elysium of enchantment thou must see."

"I began to feel," said the priest, "as I approached the borders of this clime, that nature was clothed with more than ordinary beauty, and thought indeed that I was entering an ideal world."

"To-morrow," returned the Zoatian, "I will take thee to see the magnificent city. But come now and sup with me ; it will refresh thee."

So saying they repaired to the dining-court, to partake of a sumptuous repast, for at that time the elaborate meal of the day came at evening.

After the dinner and the talk that ran far into the evening, Elandos accompanied the aged priest to his lodgings, in the palace of Zellota, and after a moment's conversation with her, as she stood on the trellised portico, he returned to his own home.

CHAPTER VII.

EXCURSION THROUGH PETOSÉGA—VISIT TO THE WITCH OF THE BURNING BUSH—THE DESTROYING PHIAL.

THE Zoatian the next morning had everything in readiness for an excursion through the city. The priest was rested, and entered into it with joyous spirits. Everywhere the grand buildings, the imposing structures, the luxuriant gardens, the meridian thoroughfares, drew from him exclamations of surprise and delight. The garden, the terraces, the sapphire wall, the Calla, the Pnyx, the temple of Etis—in fact all the remarkable features of the capital were visited. They drove through the great thoroughfares, especially the avenues Rosetta and Remelso. They returned early in the afternoon, and when dinner was over, and some time had been spent in discoursing on the sights of the expedition, Elandos mentioned the witch of the Burning Bush, and suggested a visit to the cavern, on the approach of twilight.

This journey seemed indeed a charming climax to the day. But where were the high and the true gods, that they did not warn this pure-souled priest of the danger which lay in wait for him? Not a hint of evil did he receive as, side by side with the magician, he drove to the infernal abode of the devilish hado.

They made their way down the path through the copse-like thicket, to the scorched plain, and up the rocky incline to the dismal mouth of the cavern. As they

crossed the threshold the hideous harpy with its vulture body and web feet hopped from the dark spaces along the wall, and in Stygian tones signalled their approach. In front of the flickering fagot-fire sat the hado, or saga. Her skeleton form and sepulchral face would have repelled the stoutest heart, for she seemed a spectre from some realm between life and death ; some horrible shadow-land, upon which neither sun, moon, nor stars ever shone.

On the fire the caldron stewed and bubbled as before. As the two entered and approached the fire, Elandos noticed a most strange and pleasing effect from the kettle. The tints of the spluttering mass were more brilliant than the tints of rubies, and the light which it shed about the foul and loathsome cavern seemed to transform it into a temple of beauty.

The hag turned at the sound of steps and the unearthly cries of the harpy, and perceiving the Sage of the Crimson Sash, joyously saluted him.

"Hail ! great Prince," she said, "thou art welcome to the abode of the interpreter of the moon's lore," and she advanced and fell in servile adulation at his feet.

"Rise, wise saga," said the Zoatian, "and greet another reader of the stars and joint servant of Belmeth, Hurotas." With this the hag rose and made a deep obeisance to the priest.

Elandos was well pleased that the witch had been so careful to be prepared for his coming. She had been diligent in keeping the caldron boiling with the elixir of life, never allowing the hues to dim, or its life-giving substance to diminish. The face of Elandos was radiant with a happy smile, as he perceived the splendor of the caldron.

"Ha, ha!" he thought, "the stars do marshal themselves to my fortunes."

Then he said aloud, "Canst thou not, wise hado, compound us a refreshing mixture, diluted and carefully strained, that it may strengthen our fatigued spirits?"

"Yea, mighty Zoatian," said the witch, "many life-giving potions have I made for such as thee," and so saying she took some of the crimson liquid from the caldron and poured it into two phials; then went back into the gloomy recesses of the cave, and remained for a few moments. Here she added to the blue phial some of the deadly mixture that boiled in the caldron at Elandos' first visit, three drops of which would instantly separate the soul from the body. Into the red phial she poured a solution which lessened the powerful effect of its original nature and left it with but an exhilarating force. Then she brought them toward the fire, and with a low obeisance gave the blue to the priest, the red to the Zoatian. Elandos glanced at the priest with this courteous toast: "To thy long life, Hurotas," and immediately drank the mixture, supposing his companion would do the same. But the priest held it in his hand and hesitated.

"Think not, noble Elandos," he said, "that I am ungrateful if I drink not to thy royal health and bridal happiness, but my past illness has made me most sensitive to the effects of all enlivening potions. But, noble Elandos, I promise thee, when three days have passed and my health is safely returned—to thy bride, thyself, and thy united and unending joy, I will drink the magic elixir."

The Zoatian, thus suddenly baffled, was for a moment sorely tempted to overpower the priest and force the deadly draught down his throat, but this temptation soon passed.

"I grieve, noble Hurotas," he replied, "that thy precious life is yet in such fickle condition. Thy discretion seemeth better than my desires ; against thy prudence I would not dissuade thee ; but I pray that the gods may soon knit up thy strength anew. Sleep will be better for thee than aught else ; so let us depart."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WILES OF THE ZOATIAN—SENDS HUROTAS TO VISIT THE ROCKY ISLE.

It was a bold, hazardous plan which Elandos had formed, that of putting out of the way both his once-beloved Zellota, and the once-revered priest, Hurotas, and afterward by some means to gain possession of Lenore—a cruel, most heartless, and fiendish scheme; but such was his purpose, such his wicked ambition. It was of very sudden origin, and of but a day's growth. It had supplanted a noble passion. His desires had been abruptly reversed, a vital revolution in his nature in a few hours' time, and the fixed and formulated course thrown into chaos. The momentous new design needed the keenest oversight and thoughtfulness. Time was a necessary element to its successful issue, which, so far, had been but little. Opportunity, too, must be secured for secret, silent, unobtruded attention to the intricate network of the plot. The coming of the priest, now, was disastrous to the perfection of the plan, for the expected hospitality, as it already had, would consume much of the time and would prevent the concentration of his mind to the undertaking. Freedom from these vital hindrances must in some plausible way be assured for a day or two at least, if no more, that he might make clear his course and provide for possible failures and expedients; for he had found, by the unsuccessful visit

to the hado, that provision for contingencies would be very necessary. The foresight and prudence of Elandos will be seen. He had mentioned the exquisite scenic beauty and wonderful formation of the rocky isle called Effelda. He would excite the priest's attention still more to those wonders, and would suggest two alternatives to the priest,—that as he himself wished to devote a day's time exclusively to elaborate preparations for the nuptial ceremony, and make it striking in expensiveness and grandeur, he could see no way of devoting his time to the entertainment of Hurotas, and he must consequently depend upon himself for amusement ; or, if he wished, just now there would be fine opportunity to make an excursion to the beautiful island, and on his return everything would be in readiness for the happy occasion. He would leave to his choice a desultory day, or one of wondrous and thrilling visions.

"My noble Hurotas," said the Zoatian, on the morrow, when they met again in his library in the afternoon, "a dilemma doth perplex me. As the last of the house of Kormath, it is my high desire to make the nuptial exercises commensurate with that dignity. Such preparation has not yet been made. It needs a day or two to complete it in proper significance and beauty. To do this needs a thoughtful use of time. To give myself to the honors of Zellota, I must desert thee, and leave thee a stranger here to thyself ; or thou couldst make a visit to the famous Effelda, which will give thee ideas of grandeur and historic beauty that are not fabricated in dreams. But choose thou, Hurotas. Now join thou in the luxuries of the Petoségan clime."

While they conversed still more at the sumptuous evening meal, the priest concluded to take advantage of

this his only visit in that region, and go the next morning to see the renowned isle. He was a most earnest and ardent devotee of Nature, and scarce needed persuasion to study her new charms. So, quite early the next forenoon, the Zoatian accompanied him to the harbor, and on board a high-masted vessel bound for the fairy continent.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ZOATIAN'S VISIT TO LENORE AND ZELLOTA—THE PROPHECY WRITTEN IN CRIMSON FLAME.

NEAR the middle of the day Elandos went down the Avenue Rosetta and paid a visit to Lenore, and earnestly inquired the condition of her mother. His manner was so tender and considerate that the hearts of both the women warmed toward him, for Lenore did not for a moment dream that his interest meant more than kindness. Both mother and daughter regarded him as a kind friend in a time of great need.

Then Elandos selected again some red roses, together with asphodel, and presented them to Zellota. She received the flowers kindly, but he was not so gentle as usual, and there seemed to be an inner conflict of serious nature which made its external appearance in quickly coming and quickly vanishing dark shadows. She tried in vain to coax the gentle spirit of his nature to mastery, but he was obdurate without explanation, and in a short time turned away from her and departed.

Zellota dismissed the sad incident of her lover's ill-temper, with the thought that it was but the momentary caprice due to fallible human nature, and went joyfully about the preparations for the approaching nuptials.

The Zoatian went directly home, walked into his

library, sank into a chair, and thought long and deeply. When he uncovered his face all the virtues of his heart had flown, never more to be recalled.

It was now evening ; the lighter shades of the early twilight had deepened into darker hues, and Elandos went once more to consult the weird hado of the cavern. As he walked down the path through the copse, the soft, tender light of the overhanging moon glinted the dewy blades on either side ; while through the branches, as he turned up toward the cavern's mouth, a sudden gale seemed to come down from the craggy top and set the near aspen leaves into quivering and uncanny motions. In the southern sky a transparent fleecy haze might be seen to extend upward to some distance, while above, piles of heavy cloud seemed to take on peculiar, gyrating movements, as weird as they were uncommon.

As he entered the confines of the cave the huge cat, which had in previous visits lain curled in a dark corner, passed before him in the dusky light, halted, turned its green, uncanny eyes toward him, and then drew back its thin, hairy lips from its sharp teeth. This was one of the hado's constant companions, and was quite capable of making a savage attack upon the intruder ; but the witch heard his approach, and in commanding tones sent the cat into the dark recesses of the cavern.

"Hail, great Sage," said the hado, "thou art welcome, thrice welcome. The fluttering air told me that thou shouldst come."

"Wise saga," said Elandos, "ill-omened were our stars ; and the priest still lives. Go by yonder bush and read what the soft moon says to me ; she seems to smile, yet my heart hath its misgivings. The hour hastens, and not

a minute must go unused. The ordinary events of hours must be crowded into moments. Brief is our time. Wise saga, use thy skill."

With this the hado bent down and took from the earthen hearth an irregular coal, and going to the farther wall took a piece of lime-rock, slate-like in appearance, from a small pile. This she took to the mouth of the cavern, to the burning bush, and with motionless form, bending over the strange instruments in her skinny hands, she stared into the weird shrub.

The leaves of the burning bush were alternately ashen and crimson, blending and interchanging in the breeze. But now, as the wind began to blow strong and harsh, the hues began to deepen : fiercer and fiercer blew the blast, the ashen color disappeared, gradually deepening into the crimson ; soon all the grayish tints were gone, and each leaf was a bed of vermillion, agitated violently in the now terrific gale. In a moment more the outlines of the leaves were lost, and the pointed, serrated tips lengthened into tongues of flame, which pitched and darted in all directions like the breath of demon spirits. The wind, which had blown hitherto horizontally, now appeared to come from opposite directions in maddened force, striking into the heart of the bush, while the flames shot upward in great lurid streaks.

The witch, who had watched the strange transformation of the bush with steadfast eye and immovable figure, now stood erect with the lime-rock tablet in the left hand, and with the right dipped the coal in the living flame. The coal became crimson ; and turning her thin, cadaverous, ghoul-like face toward the soft moon, she slowly wrote, ever and anon heating the coal in the sheeted flame. After some moments she uttered in strangely

weird tones the following lines, while the Zoatian listened with fixed eyes and a breathless form :

“ The cast of doom may spread o’er nature’s face,
Terrific woes may in their seasons come,
The planets all may madly whirl in space,
And change the tropic to the arctic zone.
Thrice this may come ; but over land and sea,
The one thou lov’st shall follow thee.”

“ Wise saga,” exclaimed the Zoatian in exultant tones,
“ gold shall be thy meed for this true reading of heaven’s
lore, and thy life’s limit shall reach unto the span of
Alpha Centauri.”

CHAPTER X.

THE CRIMSON HEART OF THE SAGE OF THE CRIMSON SASH—THE MURDER OF ZELLOTA.

ELANDOS returned to his library, his wavering faith in the stars restored, and with a firm belief in his great destiny, and the realization of all his hopes confirmed by the extraordinary prophecy of the saga. He needed no further evidence of his own power, his sympathy with nature, and the greatness of his future. He felt more than he had for years—perhaps ever had felt—his own influence over mere matter. He knew now that his own intellectual force was exerted upon the pale moon and the stars. Nature might be thrown into chaos, even such a wonderful and improbable thing as this, so said the lore, yet his purpose would be triumphant. So now he despised more than ever the limits of the material world that kept him confined in a realm of lost desires, and prevented him from entering into the new fields of hope and new-born joys. He scorned the idea that his soul should be chained to an unmeaning past. He sneered at that weak sentiment which would relegate him to a lower heaven, when he had discovered a higher one. Could he be held by the artificial customs that ignorant and unthinking men have made? Should the physical senses direct the flight of the soul? Was not the soul a law unto itself? All worlds its own to fre-

quent? It organizes its own mechanism of laws, and asks not the unwitting wisdom of the social state to aid it. Thus, who shall dispute its right to sweep asunder in its most exalted states the ties it formed in its blinder moods? Shall not each higher soaring begin a new unwritten scroll? What claims has the written past? THE PAST IS BUT THE ASHES OF A BURNED EXISTENCE. By them the soul has been refined, but its purer flame looks not back again upon them. Here is the separation of the spiritual from the physical. The ashes that have burned down from the wood, the flames no more touch; they reach forth to the unburned wood; so the soul rises purer, more refined, from the ashes of the past, and looks not back again, but to the realm of the unexperienced higher. The soul's only law is toward the more ethereal future, not toward the refuse past, but toward a constantly rising ideal. If there are shadows in the present, it must discard them; only the pure ray it seeks; any menace upon the future it must check, any limit to its growth. The moral law of the soul is unbounded possibility; it recognizes no condition of limitation; its own attainment, its own elevation, is all the moral law it knows. Other substances, other existences, it knows not of; they are also laws unto themselves. Its power is measured by its control of circumstance, and its victories over constantly encroaching matter. The more it overcomes, the more has it appropriated to itself of the essence of pure being. The silver planes of present existence must yield to the golden planes of the future, regardless of the entangling chains that matter may have formed. The soul listens to the call from above, not from below. Its lessons are from the future, never from the past; always from anticipated joy and intenser life,

never from experienced pleasure or delight ; for that, according to the soul's law, is base and despicable.

Thus mused the Zoatian, half unconsciously repeating, "the past is but the ashes of burned existence," as his code of moral ethics. And according to this system of life he proceeded to act.

With an air of decision upon his countenance, Elandos rose from the cosey divan, and, making preparation of his toilet, went at once to the palace of Zellota. He had it in his mind to gently indicate to her his somewhat changed feeling : to do this in a very indirect and delicate manner, and watch the effect upon her. Her woman's pride, touched at the right point, might recall her own love, and so more easily release him from the expected nuptials. This might be a simple solution of the difficulty, and he be left innocently free to pursue the soul's higher plane, which he had so fervently soliloquized upon. This was all he intended to discover in this interview, and what happened was not deliberately planned. The visit to the witch of the Burning Bush, and his long soliloquy in his library, had made it somewhat late when he started to see Zellota. The evening was beautiful, the balmy breeze came in from the Lossa sea, and the air had the fragrance of the first paradise. The silver sickle of the moon ran fast over the fleecy sea of clouds, and here and there its dazzling splendor came into full view as it shot across the blue patches of sky into the transparent haze which was forming. The unusual brilliancy and scenic cast of the sky were passed unnoticed by this great devotee of nature ; he merely knew that the night was one of great beauty and grandeur, but he saw nothing and felt nothing of the supernatural portents that were gathering in the heavens.

Self, and the still larger elevation of that self, absorbed the Zoatian's mind. O, had not the eyes of his soul been ruined by wicked love which blinded the outer vision, how had been delayed the blasting of womanly innocence and the entailment of an endless doom! Thus the blinded self goes about the world, creating its own expiation and its own ALECTO.

The Zoatian found the slave at Zellota's palace on his last quarter-beat of duty. "Is thy mistress yet the lover of the beautiful night, or is the hour too far gone?" said the Sage, as he ascended the marble steps. "My Lord Elandos," returned the slave, "though late, my mistress doth keep unusual watch in the middle parlor," as he saluted the late guest with bended knee and great show of reverence. He then conducted him through the long hallway, passing by numerous doorways, which, with most rich and exquisite drapery, led into sumptuously furnished apartments, soon reaching the middle parlor, the Room of Gold, in which all the hangings were of brilliant golden tints. Zellota was sitting on a low couch, richly hung with laces and softened by beautifully embroidered cushions. She was in a meditative mood, her exquisitely shaped face resting on her right hand.

The Zoatian met his betrothed bride with a fervent tenderness, and placed a Judas kiss upon her brow as he took her hand and walked to the couch from which she had risen to welcome him. Her sweet features, not beautiful, but lovely, and her expression, which told of a half melancholy affection, seemed for a moment to raise her to his heart's love once more, yet only for a moment. The first few words had all the old fervor, but the unlawful desires of his artful and ambitious soul soon gained their ascendancy.

"Zellota," he said, as they sat down together on the divan, "dost thou know aught of the philosophy of love? Doth it descend from the heavenly goddesses, or is it but the chance growth of earthly creatures?"

"Whether the spirit of love," answered Zellota, "dwelleth first in the hearts of the immortals, or in the human bosoms, the frail playthings of Time, I know not; but this I do know, that it doth flow into the soul, the only wine of human existence."

"Aye, thou sayest true, Zellota," said Elandos; "and dost thou believe in the fabled blindness of love?"

"Yea; the legends tell that love is the only deity born blind," said Zellota, thoughtfully, "but vision may be grown of its existence."

"Thou speakest considerably," said Elandos; "and dost thou think there is an undeviating, inevitable law by which love acts? Has love in itself a ruling principle, which directs it unerringly, or does some active outside power point it to the proper goal?"

"Methinks," said Zellota, "love hath an instinct, an intelligence that doth ever guide the soul in the quest of its mate." As she said this she looked straight into the eyes of Elandos with her own steady, loving eyes of soft brilliancy, but in his there was no response. They were cold and passionless, and pale shadows lay where the love-light once had been. Her heart sank, and then a pallor overspread the crimson of her cheeks.

"But if love be blind," said Elandos, "how may it unerringly seek its true dwelling-place? May not the heart in blindness bestow its affection, and then in the light of the broadened soul find itself inharmonious with the pledged devotion?"

"O Elandos, Elandos, believest thou that love can

really change?" said Zellota, as she flung her arms around his neck and tried to look into his eyes again; but he turned his face away, and pushed her from him. She did not resist his movements, but sat motionless, with downcast eyes. Then she spoke again :

"O Elandos, think of the love plighting of the past. Think of the far-away distant zone, in the warm acacia's shadow; think of the happy hours when our lives drank deep of joy. Can it be that now, on the very threshold of the bridal hour, thou dost change? No, my own Elandos, it cannot be;" and again in passionate fondness she approached and would have caressed him; but now, too, he waved her aside, and as he did so rose from the couch and made a movement toward the curtained door.

He had taken but three steps when Zellota, in the despair of hope, in the terrible agony of lost love, in the grief of crushed joy, in the awful realization that her bridal morn was never to be, advanced with a frenzied step and flung herself once more upon the retreating and faithless lover.

The Zoatian saw that the effect of his words was far different from what he had hoped. He had thought her pride would conceal any manifestation of love and disappointment; but Zellota was one of those natures in whom love had dwelt, and dwelling, had absorbed her whole being. It was happiness, life, eternity. And it was in the wildness of passionate despair, in the frenzy of a wrecked soul, that she caught at the figure of departing love.

"O Elandos, Elandos, my own lover, dost thou forget the sacredness of love on this our eve of consummated joy? O, dost thou test the truthfulness of my devotion by this cruel device of change? O, this is thy cunning

exploit ; this I know. But now, feign no more, and let thy love-self return as in the happy dreamland of the past." With this she fell in distracted wailing upon his breast.

"Away, woman," said Elandos, unguardedly. "Thee I have ceased to love ;" and a terrible look of anger and vexation came over his dark features, as he vainly tried to release himself from her. This being ineffectual, and fearing lest the house and servants should be aroused by her frantic cries—knowing that they could never be reconciled—fearing that the future would be ruined by this unexpected turn—in a moment of rage that this woman whom he had ceased to love should dare to be a burden to him, he drew from the folds of his robe the gold-mounted, diamond-pointed instrument hanging from the flaming sash, and with unerring aim thrust it straight into the heart of his once loved *amorata*. Zellota fell dead at his feet, by a lover slain, her life-blood flowing in a crimson stream over the gold-tinted matting and the tessellated floor. Elandos, awakened as it were to the awful horror of the crime, stood as if chained to his victim's side by the terrific smittings of conscience. And while he stood, avenging fate came with her heralds to punish.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ISLAND OF EFFELDA—THE ACROPOLIS OF THE NORTH.

DESCRIPTION cannot be over imaginative of this beautiful island of the now northern seas. There are two great reasons for its fame. Because it has stood among all the generations the unscathed monument of antiquity. It will be learned by the reader that the giant two, of the awful, whirling monsters, somehow separated as they approached this island. After it passed between them they fell into line again far beyond, and with the exception of the vast fragments of rock which were broken off by the convulsions and the volumes of water, the island was left unimpaired, as it had stood through the untold ages of time. Of the remarkable breaking up and changing of nature, it alone remains to tell of that full, undimmed, ancient glory.

The imperial Petoséga has lain for centuries in its ruins under the frozen fingers of the foe; the huge earth-piles stretching forth almost like mountains, and having above them the traces of the awful cataclysm of nature, showing how the metropolis was struck out from its career among the nations. There are few things now of human handiwork that tell of the ancient city, the greatest of them being most of the terraces inlaid with brilliant marble. Over these the modern traveller wanders, and falls into thinking of the strangeness of

the past. He climbs the hills where thirty centuries earlier ran the great radial thoroughfares, and some distance farther on he stands on a little plain where gathered the multitudes in the Pnyx so long ago, or somewhat to the right he views the place where the devotees of Etis worshipped at her golden shrine. So do thousands ramble over this most remarkable buried city of history, during the warm arc of the year, to see where a metropolis was annihilated, where nature ushered in one zone at the departing of another. The unnumbered travellers hope that some antiquarian society will ere long take upon itself the noble purpose of letting the light of the modern world in upon the treasures of a lost civilization. The moonlight is soft and playful as it was then, but only now during the brief summer suns. The Albatross, refusing to go, sweeps its white plumes over the Selenella, uttering its plaintive cry, thus vividly recalling the ancient lovers under its ill-omened presence. And over all the place there is a charming, though sad, serenity.

But Effelda is not destroyed : it stands now as it stood then, the Acropolis of the North, a national pharos to the three northern seas, peerless in historic grandeur and in sublime beauty. The island is not large, full half a league one way and one fourth the other ; but it has a wonderful and lofty contour. All around it are walls of solid rock, rising like palisades out of the sea, four hundred feet high above the waters. From these embattled summits the summer tourist views the confines of two nations and three different oceans. Grand indeed are these sweeping visions over the distant inlands, over the wide and voluminous seas, over the massed extents of cities. From this spot, where the

human has dwelt through all historic time, one may view afar the mighty engines of modern life, shuttling to and fro over the land. How strangely the impulsive present hour overruns the sluggish past !

The island is a large table-land of wonderful beauty and scenery. The green clusters of cedars and the gold foliage of the Seleucion tree make a charming picture against the mild blue sky. Up the high-walled sides the trailing vines climb in matted beauty, self-renewing as the scions drop away through the ages to the hoary waves below. Everywhere athwart its surface are delightful forest avenues, always gently ruffled by the winsome sea-breeze, while through these leaves the soft sun makes fantastic pictures upon the strolling throngs.

Another striking characteristic is that Effelda has been the fortress of the nations, as they have come successively upon the arena of existence through all the long periods of both fabulous and human record. Thirty centuries ago the Petoségan emblem, the Albatross with crescent on gold field, floated from the flagstaff in pride and dominion. Now, upon the ruins of all that celebrity, our own beloved ensign of liberty bids good-by to evening and greets the dawn. Then, the heavy charge of the catapult was the salute heard at sunset ; now the tremendous cannon echoes far and wide the sentinel life upon the island.

But above all in grandeur and sublimity are the mythical and historical monuments of Effelda. One of the most beautiful is the gigantic monolith, or tomb of Melodec, the beloved consort of Etis. He was human, but the goddess loved him, and this produced jealousy among her immortal sisters. By their combined power

through intervention to the sovereign throne, when Melodec was returning in his galley from their meeting at her temple in Petoséga, and when he was just where Effelda now is, he was suddenly dissolved into water. Etis almost immediately discovered this terrible act of her sister divinities, and in honor of him caused this very island to rise from the waves. There she built this tomb.

It stands upon the eastern side, and is grander now than it was then in the sunny twelve moons of long ago. It is an immense stone monument hewn out of quartz granite, some fifty feet through at the base, and one hundred and fifty high. The sides remain vertical for half way up, then slope in a graceful curve toward the centre, making the top almost like a half circle. In the middle of it was placed a prostrate stone figure of Melodec, which may be reached to this day from the fact that geologic processes have worn away the softer materials of the monument, leaving little recesses along its sides, thus making it accessible to the daring. It was situated on the high table-land in that distant day, and remained so till the time of the Petoségans. But it shows a different aspect now, and grander—for the leviathan foes in their awful whirling and contorting of the deep, tore off tremendous blocks of layers of rock, one after another, inland for nearly a mile, and as far along the shore on this eastern side, for two hundred feet deep. It may seem remarkable that these vast strata could be moved bodily, quarried suddenly out of the cubic stone ; but so gigantic a cataclysm is accounted for from the fact that these formations were of a soft and fragile nature, and some seismic convulsions long past ran seams in every direction, leaving them movable by any

terrible power. So this gigantic avalanche of rock was whirled into the sea, and the modern mariner holds fast to port as he rounds the island and points out the mighty fragments. The rock, however, underlying the monolith, was of a harder substance, and was not swept away, but was left as a base for this memorial tomb, which gives it much greater height and sublimity.

The finest view is to be had from the edge of the table-land, where it was left in a vertical wall two hundred feet high. One looks far down upon this little plain, which has been covered for these ages with a sapling undergrowth that cannot grow large for lack of soil; but it is webbed thick with foliage, and in the midst rises grandly the tomb of Melodec, and on the top may be vaguely discerned the cumbent form of the hero. The crystal particles in the monolith glisten brilliantly in the light of sun or moon, while beyond you are the soft and luring waters of the sea. There this grand monument has stood for fabulous time, defying all elements to destroy it; but like the wonderful obelisks of the Nile, climatic change is perceptibly the destroyer of this beautiful memorial of love.

Another exquisite, romantic scene is called the "Bridal Arch of Neptune." It consists of a grand rock arch two hundred feet to the keystone, situated on the north-easterly shore. It is cut out of the circling rock that rises abruptly from the beach. It is of beautiful white material, and the centre stone is a figure-piece cut into a bust of Neptune looking placidly upon his liquid empire. Through this arch the fable has it that the marine god led his naiad daughters and wed them to the sons of men. Seaside lovers now often sit beneath it, watching the

beams of the full moon play across the limpid waters below, as did ancient swains, and plight their troth and add another tale to the delightful legends every nook and corner of this historic archway tell. Beautiful it is to visit this supernatural handiwork in the gloaming twilight, when the romance of a hundred civilizations seems to be clothed again in the fairy forms that hover thick about you.

On the southern side there is a historic spot, and the steam craft that pass slow up while their passengers gaze long and silently upon it. It is termed "Lovers' Leap," and is a tall shaft of rock, heart-shaped, standing almost separated from the rest, while its base is bathed in the waters four hundred feet below. Here, for time untold, ill-starred lovers have plunged into the sea depths. Numberless have been the wrecks of hearts here, for the rock is worn to a deep hollow and glassy smoothness, where the thousands have leaped to their doom.

'These are the stars of her beauty ; but multitudinous are her charms.

Oh, lovely are thou, Effelda, thou Circe of isles, thou Acropolis of the north, that dost allure the throngs of humankind to visit thy azure skies and summer seas ! Charmed they are by thy twilights, and carried away into fairy dreamland by thy evening gales ! Beauteous, serene, sublime art thou still, though thy ancient loveliness that filled all the year is blotted out now to three short, fleeting moons. In Petoséga's imperial reign thou didst radiate the seasons round with thy glory. Now thou art but the brilliant rainbow setting to the ice-crowns of the north. Yet the millions love thee, and gather at thy shrines of gales and scenic skies in the soft summer time ; but ponder—as they ramble—why the ancient foe didst

smite thee with wrath, and drawest about thee the dreadful winding-sheets of ice and snow ; but they smile when they think that the soft rays after long melt the Arctic sceptre. Then thy blush and beauty are born anew, and thy worshippers come from the four square world.

CHAPTER XII.

FIRST FOREWARNING OF NORTHERN WRATH PHOTOGRAPHED ON THE SOUTHERN SKY—UNEXPECTED RETURN OF THE PRIEST—CRIME DETECTED.

THE shadows of doom lengthen on the glorious city. The terrible spectre of the ancient foe reappears. Beloved metropolis of Etis, the anger of the Northland's god is upon thee. The impetuous Thor shall grind thy marble statues into ice.

While the awful tragedy was going on in the palace of Zellota, a most startling phenomenon was being displayed on the southern sky. Silently and breathlessly the Petoségans crowded the thoroughfares to witness the sublime and prophetic scene, foretelling the coming doom of a nation. Such a scenic display in the heavens was never known before, nor has authentic history ever contained a narrative of such a thing. The occurrence is not explicable by human reason or scientific analysis, but must be referred to the inscrutable events of the supernatural. Who shall say that it was not the warning of an unseen intelligence? O purblind human vision, oft doth the pathetic voice of kind Nature admonish ye in vain! Through the darkness of thy own soul thou canst not see even the glimmering of the high lights on the coasts of nature's fitful seas!

As I realize the clearness and fulness of the description in the parchment, I confess my utter inability to give

a picture in words of this wonderful panorama of the heavens. First, belting all the southern sky, was a thin, gauzy haze, tinted very slightly with yellow ; then on this light background was thrown an enormous cloud-shadow, dark and trembling, and it covered all the space of the tinted haze. It quivered and trembled, and in its darkness seemed like a vast animated mass, whose vitality was countless times more intense than ordinary life, quivering far off in the curved heavens. It charmed, astonished, and terrified at once ; and so freighted did it seem with ill-omened messages from invisible spheres, that they who saw it lost the moral courage of the senses, and were almost too weak at heart to look again.

But most prophetic and startling of all was the brilliant and altogether indescribable scene pictured on the trembling cloud-shadow. Thrown upon its vast extent lay the great city of the Petoségans in most gorgeous splendor, most fascinating colors, covered with the most perfect and beautiful artistic figures and outlines. What a vast canvas of hovering, vibrating shadow-cloud for the invisible architect of the spheres to paint upon ! The whole grand extent of the beautiful Petoséga was pictured there ; the towering white peak of the Sanfeldo lay against the dark cloud on the eastern extremity, like an immortal battlement of the heavens, while the tall green-foliaged trees fringed its base. There in its majestic beauty was the golden-globed dome of the Pnyx, and its great Doric columns seemed the very pillars of the Olympian throne. The magnificent temple of Etis, with its grand dome of many meridians, its numberless pure white marble colonnades, appeared to be indeed the home of their patron goddess, as it nestled closely at the foot of the rising Calla grove.

Beautiful beyond description was this grove of unnumbered trees with vari-colored foliage, with the flowing fountains, the masses of flowers, and the exquisite outlines of the grove itself, as they all lay pictured on the sable cloud.

The grand streets of the city, with their graceful lines of evergreen and willow, ran on to a great distance and were lost in the yellow haze; but climaxing all the grandeur and beauty were the majestic and sublime figures of the sapphire wall, and the garden, and the marble-terraced amphitheatre, overlooking the emerald-green Selenella bay. The brilliant points of the sapphire wall dazzled with their changing color far around its great elliptic circle, while the ivory figure of Etis rising from the centre of the garden, was, like the great goddess herself, surrounded by a dark veil of wrath. The long, magnificent curves of the wonderful terraces looked as if the spheres themselves had been robbed of a dozen brilliant crescents to form this unparalleled coliseum.

Weird and beautiful also were the waters of the bay—now grown troubled by the sudden rise of a late wind—for as living waters, they seemed to be transferred to the heavens. Dark and rolling in blackness was the bosom of the Selenella, presenting a thrilling scene. The quick, sharp blasts that swept over its surface raised it ever and anon into bright ridges of various fantastic forms—some long and slender, like the Ethiops' lances, others like the crescent shields of the bowmen of Zoatia. Then were seen outlines like a shattered mountain side, or the jagged, dazzling summit of an Arctic iceberg; while other waves, more headlong and impulsive, seem to roll on the beach, and are shattered, like the steel of the Titans, on the rocks of Tarpeia.

Grand was this entire panorama; strange enough to strike the beholder dumb, and pictured with a vividness no artist's brush has ever known, bewildering, amazing, confounding, charming with its beauty and frightening with its terror. This photographic display on the surface of a black, quivering, vital cloud was so far from even the extraordinary occurrences known to mortals that strong men and women grew weak, reeled and fainted.

At the upper outline of the figured city, the yellow haze was merged suddenly into tremendous piles of pure white cloud, such as is to be seen on a summer's eve. These continents glistened like great mountains of crystal ice, as their irregular and broken outlines were lighted up by the pale rays of the overhanging moon. There were three of them, and after a weird transformation, they came out into a startling distinctness, the middle one being fully twice the size of the others. Each seemed to be independent and separate, and moved round and round with a rather slow but majestic motion, appearing to advance over the city. When these were first seen they seemed a considerable distance away, but were now approaching slowly, and with a weird grandeur, the great metropolis; and now they were at its very gates. First of all that was seen, were the awful grinding pillars of solid white ice, which seemed to catch in their merciless grasp the long, beautiful hues of suburban forest trees which trembled for an instant, and then broke like reeds, the strong branches and green foliage disappearing in the white, devouring mass. The next moment the whirling piles were seen to crash, with the power of supernatural forces, down the spacious avenues, which were crushed in an instant into unrecognizable ruins. On and on the mighty masses moved in their

destructive fury, grinding to powder everything within their reach ; soon the great gold globe of the Pnyx was caught, as it were, between the two farther revolving monsters ; in a trice this most exquisite artificial world was dissolved into dazzling atoms, and the mighty pillars of the great structure soon fell in broken and crumbling heaps. In the next breath the tremendous vault of the temple of Etis was struck by the great white, middle mass, and was a wreck in the awful shock ; and as the fragments of the rainbow arches were thrown up toward the glimmering moonlight, it was a brilliant medley of color wonderful to behold, and probably never before or since has the human vision seen such a picture of disaster.

Onward advanced the imperial trio in power absolute, mocking in fatal contempt the egotistic works of man. Yet all was noiseless in that grand picture ; there was no sound, but it was terrible in its silent and serene majesty. As it moved it seemed a very Nemesis shod with wool. The next instant the mighty revolutions swept the sapphire wall and the proud garden of the Petoségans into the general wreck. In a thought, precious stones, art, beauty, tree, shrub, and flower, all vanished in the wake of doom. In another instant the marble terraces were doubled up, torn and pitched into fantastic shapes. Now the revolving monsters seemed to plunge into the waters of the Selenella, which like a flash took a turbid blackness, as if the depths perforce were compelled to flee. The all-powerful trio, apparently avenged, faded gradually in the yellow haze below, and the supernatural radiance of the sky slowly vanished, leaving the stars twinkling around the pallid moon.

Such was the strange and startling scene photographed

on the southern sky, the night that Elandos visited Zellota in a late hour. As he went to her home, there were unnatural movements and appearances in the heavens, but the absorbed state of his mind prevented him from seeing them.

The priest Hurotas was not a more skilled interpreter of the omens and secrets of nature than the Zoatian, but the morning of this day he had set out to visit the rocky isle Effelda, and his whole powers of observation were concentrated upon her strange appearances. A peculiar haze in the southern sky filled him with apprehension ; and when it began to deepen and rise higher and higher he decided to return to Petoséga. Arriving there when the phenomenon was in its height, he hastened to the palace of Zellota.

The hour was late, and the sentinel from his post at the door had gone. The pale shadows of the moon peering through the climbing vines on the trellises of the porticos, threw their weird traceries upon the doors before him. There was no sound within the spacious palace. Not even a flickering light disputed the reign of darkness. The priest was impatient. He could not wait in this hour of dreadful omen for the observance of formal custom, so swinging the great doors open, he entered the dark, main hall. Suddenly far ahead he saw a glimmering light now and then appear through the close curtains. Almost as if he was searching out wrong by the sense of instinct, he walks straight to the doorway, and with both hands pushes aside at once the folding drapery, and in horrified amazement he gazes on the figure of Elandos, bending in a meditative stupor over the beautiful form of Zellota, while her golden robe lies crimsoned in her life-blood !

BOOK THE THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

THE PNYX OF THE PETOSÉGANS — ITS CHARACTER, ITS FUNCTIONS, AND ITS COURTS.

It is in the early forenoon ; the day is calm and tranquil, the breezes come in from the sea like an elixir, mingling with the soft and wooing sunshine, while the luxurious flowers, bathed in the morning dew, send forth a fragrance that charms the senses. The sky is a dome of blue, unbroken except by the laboring sun that slowly pursues his vaulted course. Nature is perfect in her loveliness, and not a discord is felt in her varied realm. The terrible portent in the southern sky, as it faded so suddenly, was also in its alarming effect fading even now from the consciousness of the people. Man, consecrated to his ambition, was regardless of the effect of the phenomenal occurrences about him, and so already after but a trifling lapse of time they were forgetting the prophetic character of the wonderful appearances.

In this early part of the day the citizens were hastening to their great legislative hall, the magnificent Pnyx. The polity of the Petoségans was the result of centuries of statesmanship and wise creation of law, and was a system of civil government perhaps the most perfect known to

historic record. Still it had faults, and the most glaring was that the people were divided into slave and free. The bondmen had no political rights, yet they had a cultivated society of their own, with codes and customs of high excellence. More than all, though in slavery, they were the objects of utmost kindness, and thus were attached, almost without exception, to their superiors.

A peculiar thing among the Petoségans was that sex was unknown in the rights of property or in the privileges of freemen. Men and women alike made and annulled, upheld and sustained the customs and the habits of the people. There was no jealousy or envy; rather each was zealous that the other's rights were not infringed.

The government of the Petoségan nation was a pure democracy. There was a great council or state cabinet of twelve, in whom the executive power was vested. The great judicial functions lay in a supreme court or chamber of fifteen. The legislative power existed in a great body of citizens chosen annually, before whom the orators and advocates pleaded the causes, and by whom in popular assembly were passed the statutes and laws for the whole nation. This body occupied the inner court of the great auditorium of the Pnyx, of which a slight description becomes necessary.

The vast enclosure accommodated nearly a hundred thousand spectators. The structural outline was that of half of a perfect circle. In the centre of the diametric or straight side was a rostrum, on which sat the conductor of the assembly, the high archon of the city, called the Solmas. This was purely an executive office, and had no rights attached to it, but it was a position of high honor. He merely carried out the wishes of the assembly, and had no voice in its deliberations. He opened,

conducted, and closed the assemblies. The whole space was filled with raised, circular rows of seats, divided into sections. The innermost portion was formed into a court whose seats and furnishings were in a brilliant purple, the symbolic color of the Petoségans for law and order, for this part was given to the exclusive use of the legislative body. On the outside of this court was another, painted in deep crimson, this color being the emblem of justice. This occupied a much larger space, and was devoted to the criminal court: a grand jury composed both of the legislative body and the criminal court, sitting together in solemn assembly in cases of high crimes and misdemeanors of foreigners. The gates between these two courts, painted half crimson and half purple, were thrown open, so that the two colors were side by side during the august sessions. The great outer circles ran round all the others in belts of gorgeous blue, their token of liberty and equality, and were devoted to the use of the people. The floors and risings of all that vast area were of white marble, the woodwork being from the Seleucion tree, which grew so abundantly there in that age.

The different sitting bodies listened and passed judgment, decree, or sentence, as the case might be. The question was debated *pro* and *con* by any one who wished to speak, who was a law-abiding citizen. For this reason Petoséga had many famous orators. On this occasion the vital subject of debate was the alleged hostile aggressions of a foreign power, the question of open war and retaliatory measures being alike defended and opposed. The charges of unfriendly encroachment, when it was put to the vote, were not sustained.

CHAPTER II.

THE DEATH OF LENORE'S MOTHER—THE TALE OF ELANDOS—THE FATAL KALOS OF GOLD AND OPAL.

FROM the day that the accident happened, though severely injured, the mother of Lenore appeared to grow better, and permanent recovery seemed not far distant. Her nature had so quickly responded to the care and medicine that the alarming period was over, and no thought of danger was entertained. Hita had been the best of nurses ; her gentle acts and cheerful ways were a great support to Lenore. Losmega had been most assiduous in his attention, and was indeed a friend as well as lover. Nor was the Zoatian forgetful in this unfortunate event, observing a most dignified and gallant bearing, offering many prudent suggestions from his varied experience.

So far had the invalid regained her normal health and strength, that the lovers had planned an excursion to the favorite island of Effelda. This was the very day of the priest's visit to the island ; and after some hours of rapturous delight in each other's society, the lovers, alarmed by the phenomenal appearance of the clouds, hurried from the beautiful spot, and by chance embarked for home on the same boat in which Hurotas had taken passage.

The deepest sorrow awaited the return of the lovers. Scarcely had they been gone from the house an hour,

when a sudden faintness attacked the invalid, from which all of Hita's skill was powerless to raise her. Deeper and deeper she sank into the swoon, until at last she ceased to breathe.

Lenore's grief was pitiful to behold ; but Losmega was by her side, and his love soothed and helped her. To this pure-souled and far-seeing man, death at this time, even the death of the mother of his betrothed, seemed a joyous thing in comparison with what he felt might be their lot to suffer. The heart of Losmega was filled with love, but his spirit was pervaded with prescience of evil.

In the mean time the priest, who had been rooted to the spot of the tragedy, and had seen the Zoatian depart without the power to bid him halt and explain the awful situation, had by degrees recovered himself, and when he could at last compel his aged limbs to obey his will, he, too, turned his back upon the awful scene, and made his way as best he could to the mansion of the murderer. Elandos, somewhat pale, but quite at his ease, reclined in his library, as the priest breathlessly entered.

"Royal Elandos," he cried as soon as he could command his voice, "hearken to me, and explain thy fiendish deed; or by the sacred Belmeth, the blood of thy betrothed shall drown thy soul. I stood at the door, and saw thee, Elandos, beside thy victim. Speak now, or the fury of the gods be upon thee."

"Most venerable priest," said the Zoatian in tones of the deepest humility, "and dearest friend of my youth, I forgive thee thy dreadful suspicion, for even the gods themselves could scarcely have thought otherwise. But thou art all wrong. Be seated and listen. In this wise the awful thing occurred. My betrothed Zellota, who

lies now dead in her own blood, had been in a melancholy mood all the day. After thou didst sail for the rocky island I visited her, and gave her a bunch of roses gathered from my own garden. I was with her for some time, but the brooding spirit did not leave her. Shortly I went away to attend to the nuptial preparations, promising to return later in the day. This evening I came, but her unhappy and feverish state of mind still prevailed, and was heightened by a disposition to reproach me, the cause of which she would not make known. Finally, she charged me openly with faithless troth, going from worse to worse, until she was in actual spasms of jealousy. I used my powers to console and convince her, and many were the lover's caresses I gave her, but alas, in vain. Half beside myself I knew not what to do, and flinging my arms around her, I drew her to my heart, and fell to thinking in what way I might calm her disturbed spirit, so deceived in its envy, when suddenly, O heavens!—and blind me, ye gods, if I speak not the truth, she seized a miniature cimeter hidden in the folds of her robe, plunged it into her left breast, and sank in death agony without a cry at my feet, leaving me confounded in speech and action, as thou didst find me, wise priest. O, be thou a father to me in this terrible hour of blighted love, and the death of her I held most dear. O, ye fanes of Belmeth, can thy servant live, now the living is dead?"

"Thou couldst not have given cause for this jealousy," the priest replied, to all appearance convinced of his companion's innocence. "Beautiful Zellota, thou hast gone to thy lone tomb, and in the silent halls of death thou shalt seek without avail for thy bridal chamber. May the wooing zephyrs of unembittered love fan thy temples into mystic sleep on that shore where now thou

dost wander. Great Elandos," continued the priest, coming a step nearer, "the body of thy beloved must this night be laid in the embalming vault of the city. Wait thou here, and I will awaken and send forth a slave for a litter for the dead."

The conveyance was at hand in due time, and all that was earthly of the lovely Zellota was borne to the silent vault. This idea of the priest was in accordance with the Zoatian's mind, or at least he made no objection. His plan of action was yet unformed. When the simple ceremony was over, Hurotas returned to the palace of Elandos. Elandos, feigning great nervousness and prostration, was careful to say that only entire isolation for the remainder of the night would prevent utter exhaustion ; so on this pretext, and apologizing for so heartless a hospitality, the priest was asked to accept quarters in the farthest diagonal corner of the palace. The Zoatian did this that he might have the best opportunity to plan escape from this awful situation. The final disposition of the body of Zellota must be made with great prudence and judgment ; so also the enmity or friendliness of the priest must be provided for. The laws of the capital were very strict, and anything suspected would lead to instant investigation. But how treacherous are the wiles of the sinful, how evil burneth like fire its worshippers. Out of his own satanic artifice the fates wove the web of his doom.

The strain on the nerves of the aged priest caused by this terrible tragedy was great ; and as he lay in his own room, the excitement and confusion gave place to a careful reasoning and a thoughtful analysis of the character of the action of Elandos, and his own connection with the scene ; and as he meditated, he began to question

the solemn description of the events given by the Zoatian, to doubt even the suicidal nature of Zellota's death, to lose faith in the sworn innocence of the Sage, and to believe that he was not wholly guiltless. Suspicion thus awakened, one thought suggested another, and as he recalled the sash, the strange and mysterious emblem of the high vicegerent of Belmeth, it flashed through his consciousness, like the spirit of truth, that the pendant of gold, which was never absent from the side of Elandos, was not there. He would solve the problem.

This inner mental debate occupied a comparatively short time, for the operation was rapid. The priest arose hastily, put on his tunic, and stole silently from the palace down the avenue, grotesque with the shadows of the dim moon, into the beautiful flower garden of the home of the dead Zellota. The great doors opened to his key, and, as he walked straight to the room, the gray dawn mingled with the darkness of the night. There was no light, but he soon found the same lamp that had lighted the scene of death. He began a careful search for the kalos among the rich colored rugs, here and there red with blood. Three times he made a careful search, three times without success. At last, as he was about to leave the room, and had begun to upbraid himself for his suspicions, his foot struck something hard, and stooping down and lifting the edge of a mat, which partly concealed the instrument, he found the diamond-pointed pendant covered with blood to the gold mounting.

"By the gods, can it be?" he exclaimed. "What perfidy in thy name, O goddess of Belmeth! Is it so, is it so?" the priest sadly moaned as he held the crimson kalos in his hand and gazed with fixed eyes upon it. "My worst suspicions are verified, right here before me

in the awful language of blood and the tell-tale weapon. May vengeance from the sacred fanes, O goddess of my own Zoatia, strike the heart of this thy sinful worshipper," and, hiding the secret of this great crime closely in the folds of his robe, he turned and quickly left the palace.

In a few minutes he was again in his room, the whole adventure having been made unnoticed by any human being. For the present the priest decided to keep the secret, and to watch lest he himself should fall into the web of the Zoatian's power. He would part with his life ere he would surrender the tell-tale opal and gold pendant.

CHAPTER III.

THE WILY ZOATIAN WEAVES A WEB—THE WITCH OF
THE BURNING BUSH—THE EFFECT OF THE MAGIC
PHILTER—THE PRIEST ENTRAPPED.

THE terrible strife for self-preservation was fairly set in motion during this night of murder and apparently supernatural incident, and with a determination characteristic of a pure and noble heart, the priest had given himself to the work of retribution. His own life would be but a slight sacrifice in bringing to the bar of justice the murderer of an innocent and beautiful woman.

The burning necessity for his own safety and escape from punishment for his crime, as well as for a clear way to carry to successful issue the mighty plan of winning Lenore, rocked and swayed the strong frame of Elandos, as in the agony of confused thought he hurriedly paced to and fro in his darkened chamber, caged as it were by the torment of the disordered world within, as the lion shut in by the iron bars makes his mad revolutions. Remorse, ungratified passion, the terrible possibility of exposure, the probable failure of all his hopes, and the cruel desertion of the fates were subjects not pleasant to contemplate. Such was the mental fever and pain for some minutes after Elandos had conducted the priest to his apartments and entered his own room.

Never before had he really reached the supreme crisis

of his life. Triumph or doom must be his lot now. He could not trust his friend, Hurotas, as the latter's first bitter reproach and half accusation proved. He must ignominiously fail or immortally surmount the opposing destiny. He would summon all the powers of this and the invisible world to aid him. He would wage the strife to the very crimson sword-hilt, and the dire blastings of magic. He would sink forever beneath the weight of his destiny, or rise the victor over doom. At last he finished his nervous pacing, and with a new strength, a new and still more awful light in his burning eyes, he raised aloft his right hand, and in a triumphant tone cried out: "To the deep, dark tomb, to the realms from which never return the meddling priest or the unsatisfied maiden, I will send mine enemies, and then take to my heart the divine Lenore. Bright stars, let thy worshipper fail in naught, and thou, pale moon, wheel mine enemies deep into the dust of time."

With this he hastily put on a fresh tunic, and cautiously leaving the palace, he hastened through the silent streets, into the path that led to the thicket and the cavern of the witch of the Burning Bush, still having faith in the hado and the mystic lore of heaven's shining worlds. Terrible as the emergency was, impending as the peril, he still had confidence in the brightness of his destiny, and so asked no more planetary interpretations. As he entered the cave and found the witch, he demanded at once the destroying phial.

"Wise saga," he said, "compound a draught that will craze the brain and eat away the vitals. Haste thou; delay is doom; and for this long years shall be thy meed. The priest that I did summon hither is more than ever a

bar in my pathway ; therefore concoct a mixture that shall shrink his senses to the babbling mutter of a babe, and send him to the black gulf of death. Haste, time dealeth not in mercy."

"My delight follows thy will, mighty Elandos," said the witch, "and quickly shall he die. I have some herbs but just compounded, that will blast his life as the burning sun sucks up the pools, and palsy his tongue as the lightning paralyzes the oak. In a trice the fluid shall be thine."

The eyes of Elandos eagerly followed the hideous creature to the darkness of the rear of the cavern, and in a moment she brought a small three-cornered phial filled with an almost colorless liquid.

"All the span of Alpha Centauri, and a half more added, be the extent of thy life, if death lurks in thy mixture."

With this deadly vessel carefully concealed, the determined Zoatian made his way hastily back to his mansion, in the gray-streaked dawn.

The style of living of Elandos was princely in every particular. The most delicious brands of wines were always on his table, as well as all the delicate dishes obtainable in the city markets ; in short, there was nothing too good or too extravagant for the high-born Zoatian. He was also a most gracious entertainer, and was famed for his faultless management of feasts and aristocratic entertainments in his native land. As a host there was not a superior in Petoséga or Zoatia. The coming morning meal was to be worthy of a priest of Belmeth. The rich and nourishing viands should be plentiful, and every detail should have the appearance of the utmost respect for his priestly guest. So the slaves were ordered

to put upon the tables the best that the spacious cellars contained. Beautiful amphora cups were filled with wine that would equal the delicious Falernian of Horace, or the rich flowing Catawba nectar whose praises our own great laureate has sung.

The dining-hall was spacious and beautiful. The floor was of checked blocks of acacia wood, and on every side were large and finely executed panels, representing various scenes of the chase, and triumph of the arts of hunting and fishing. On one side was the scene of the turbulent ocean, and from its dark and turbid waters, in beautiful contrast, was rising a great flock of white-winged geese slowly fanning the air with their strong wings.

When every preparation for the morning meal had been made by the servants, and they had absented themselves until the guests were seated, the murderous host drew the flask from his bosom and quickly poured some of the deadly fluid into the glass set for the priest; then, hiding it within the folds of his robe again, and assuming a gracious air tinged with sadness, he went to welcome Hurotas to the sumptuous repast.

"I welcome thee, my father, to the fragrance and soft breezes of the morning, to the enriching wine and the strengthening viands of my board. Come, let us make good the waste sad hours have made, and invigorate our enfeebled nerves for the sorrow that the obsequies of the beloved dead must bring."

The priest had resolved to conceal all signs of suspicion, and to act with his usual friendliness until the proper moment should arrive for throwing off his mask. So they met in a cordial manner.

"I accept thy gracious providence and hospitality,

wise Elandos," said Hurotas, "for indeed the events of the night have been both strange and sad. My limbs have trembled under the weight of sorrow, and gladly will I sit with thee at thy board."

So saying, they walked together to the dining-hall; the priest was given his seat, and Elandos sat opposite him at the table of the half moon, a design that was very frequently used when but one or two guests were present. The table was made of a peculiar and unique material, having been carved from a petrified tree, many of which were found in the region of Petoséga. The various peculiarities of the wood came out beautifully under the polish; in fact it was much richer and finer than marble.

The servants entered, and the two men began their repast. They sipped first the rich liquid of the wine-cups, and grateful indeed did it seem to the exhausted nerves of the priest. There were several cups with different wines in them, but only one contained the poison. The proportions of the draught were so skillfully blended that the paralyzing effect was not immediate. The influence was made to approach very gradually, in order that it might seem to be a natural intoxication of the wine alone.

So the priest only slowly felt the exhilaration. The attendant slave had filled his glass again and again. With intense inward delight the Zoatian watched the slow advance of the enemy as the heartless conqueror took captive the citadel of the brain. A malicious smile crept into the corners of the host's mouth, and into his eyes a fiendish triumph. At last Hurotas, as he lifted the cup to his lips, dropped it from his helpless hands, and fell over upon his side on the cushioned couch-like

seat, and lay motionless, with happy countenance. The wily Zoatian sprang from his seat and went to the priest. "Bless thee, great Belmeth," he muttered to himself, "thou art at last propitious."

He beckoned to the slaves, and, as they approached, exclaimed: "Take him in your arms and follow me. I will place him where he will not disturb nor be disturbed, until his drunkenness has passed." So saying, he led the way to an apartment in the lower part of the palace, a room seldom used, and one which the slaves were not acquainted with. It had an arched iron door like a vault. This door had stapled hinges and a peculiar lock. The Zoatian took a key from his girdle, unlocked the door, and swung it open wide. The body of the unfortunate and unconscious victim was placed upon a couch by the side of the wall, and the slaves were ordered to retire.

"Dwell there, ye babbling hypocrite, and mutter thy treacherous thoughts to the whited walls. Thou art a safe protector of the innocent, and the innocent is as safe as thou! Belmeth, thou art indeed the preserver of thy chosen, and earth's superior Lord." Then Elandos ascended the stairway with the step of a conqueror.

"What, ho!" he suddenly exclaimed as, in climbing, his eyes happened to fall upon his breast, and he began to examine the crimson sash with greatest care. "O, what is this? O goddess, where is thy opal seal? What, is there forgetfulness in me? Has the Zoatian been thus thoughtless? Silence, ye gods, till I have restored thy jewel to its wonted place. But yea, forsooth, what power to destroy has it? Stones speak not, and solid walls encompass him who looks upon it; but it has

served the wearer well, it must not be flung idly away. Ah, sash, thou art like a crown that has lost its master diadem, but thou shalt have it again." And Elandos made his way to the home of the once-beloved, lover-slain Zellota, to find the opal pendant.

CHAPTER IV.

ELANDOS AT THE PALACE OF ZELLOTA — AT THE VAULT—AT THE HOME OF LENORE.

THE Zoatian hastened to the home of Zellota, straight to the room in which the awful tragedy had happened, and began the search for the mysterious opal and gold pendant. He looked carefully on the couches, over the rugs, and everywhere, of course without success. Then he found the slave who that night had summoned the carriage from the embalming vault, and who was left in charge of the palace. But the slave had discovered nothing of that nature, and could give Elandos no satisfaction. After looking for the second time he gave up the search, persuading himself that it mattered not, as the one who knew of the mysterious nature of the kalos could never speak of it. So his mind was easily set at rest.

He now hastily returned to his own home, changed his mantle, made a sombre toilet, and hurried to the city vault where the dead Zellota lay. He left instructions that the body of his sister should be prepared for burial so that it might be interred during the next day. All arrangements were made on a scale of great magnificence. Every detail must be sufficiently grand to emphasize the fact of his royal ancestral lineage. In this way the Zoatian forestalled any attempt to question the rela-

tionship that existed between himself and the dead woman, but at this time there was no suspicion.

Elandos next repaired to the home of Lenore, to acquaint her and her mother—for he had not heard of the death of the latter—with his great trouble.

Lenore met him in the reception-room with a sad face and a changed manner.

"And can it be that the Fates have been cruel to thee also?" he asked, in a tone of the deepest sympathy.

"My mother grew suddenly worse during the awful night of portents in the southern sky," Lenore replied, "and a little later the light of her life went out. Didst thou witness the strange spectacle in the heavens?"

"That was the night of my sister's terrible agony, and I did not leave her during her dying hours; but afterward I was told of the menacing sky. At what hour is thy dear mother to be laid away?"

"To-morrow, at the hour of ten, the sad ceremony must take place."

"At the same time occur the farewell rites to my beloved sister."

"Oh, how full of sorrow that day will be for both of us! I sympathize with thee in thy grief, and thank thee again for thy kindness. I know now what it is to lose a mother; I have known what it is to be bereft of an only sister, and with thee I lament."

"My soul opens wide its doors to thy sorrow, and is burdened with thy grief," Elandos replied; and as he gently pressed the hand that Lenore so feelingly and innocently offered him, he turned his head aside, as if to hide the tears he was ashamed to have noticed.

CHAPTER V.

THE BURIAL OF LENORE'S MOTHER AND ZELLOTA—THE CARMINE BUD—RESCUE OF THE PRIEST.

THE next morning the last sad rites were paid to the beloved mother of Lenore, and many were the friends who gathered around her in the hour of her sadness. Hita, the Carmine Bud, did not attend the public obsequies, but remained at the home of Lenore, that she might remove every symbol of the great sorrow that had befallen her friend and give an air of cheerfulness to the house of mourning. The ceremony would be long, as was the custom of the Petoségans.

Among the former slaves of Hita's once-wealthy parents was one of the servants in the palace which the Zoatian only temporarily owned. He it was who helped bear the unconscious priest, at the command of Elandos, to the dark vault in the underground apartment of the mansion. Being much disturbed by the strange and cruel incarceration of the man who had seemed so holy and so kind, Tomo had, in the absence of his master, gone out to take a stroll and think over the situation. He had walked but a few squares when whom should he meet but Hita—of whom he had taken much care in her childhood—and who was on her way to the great flower gardens to select some special flowers for the burial service. The slave made a low obeisance, and humbly requested permission to speak with her.

"This is a pressing hour, Tomo," she said; "dost thou wish to speak with me for long?"

"Nay, mistress, but my soul is burdened with a dread secret."

"Reveal it to me quickly, Tomo."

"There is a priest of some goddess dying in a secret vault of my master's palace, and I helped to bear him thither by the command of my lord, Elandos."

"Elandos, Elandos, dost thou say?"

"Yea, my lord Elandos."

"Canst thou describe the priest?"

"Yea, my mistress; he is an aged priest, tall and——"

"What dost thou say, an old priest with white hair?"

"Even so, my mistress."

"A priest! an aged priest!" she murmured to herself. "Can it be possible that it is the Hurotas whom Lenore and Losmega have such an interest in? Surely it cannot be."

"Tell me quickly what thou dost know, Tomo," she said almost breathlessly.

"Yea, my noble mistress; yesterday morning at breakfast this venerable priest sat at the table of the half moon with Elandos my lord, as he had done before. The best wine had been put on the board, and both sipped their cups together. They seemed very sad, and what they said was in a solemn strain. Everything went on as usual until half an hour had gone, when suddenly the priest fell over on his side, unconscious. Then quickly Elandos ordered myself and another to bear the priest in a litter and follow him. He led us to the dark underground vault, and when he had opened the great door he commanded us to place the man far in the rear of the dungeon. We were then dismissed."

"Canst thou remember just how he looked, Tomo?" asked Hita eagerly.

"He was an old man, my mistress, tall, blue eyes, white hair, and a pleasant countenance."

"O fanes of Etis, it is Hurotas!" exclaimed Hita. "What does it mean, what does it mean? Tomo, what further strange tale dost thou know?"

"There was a mistress in the Avenue Remelso that my lord used often to visit, who during the night of the pòrtent was taken suddenly ill and died, and I have heard that this priest helped bear her to the embalming vault. A slave in the dead mistress's palace told me this."

"It is Hurotas, and he must be rescued," exclaimed Hita. "There is a dark mystery here, and by the shrines of Etis I must know. Tomo, hast thou a key to the vault?"

"There is but one,—a very particular one,—which my lord keeps always with him. I have never seen it except in his hands."

"Come, haste, Tomo, show me the way. Thy master will not return for two hours at least. The priest may be saved from death, if haply he is alive. There is more evil in thy lord, Elandos, than in this priest, Hurotas."

Hita followed him to the palace, through the halls, and down the staircases to the gloomy prison, her mind much exercised by all she had heard.

"Let us try to find if he be still alive," she said, as they reached the great iron door. So saying, she rapped three times upon the door and spoke in a clear, distinct voice.

"Is the priest Hurotas here?" she asked.

Then, after an instant, came the feeble answer :

"Yea, half in life, half in death. Art thou an angel of mercy, or an agent of destruction?"

And in the same clear, inspiring tones, Hita replied :

"Thy friends are here. Have courage. The Fates are for thee and we will rescue thee."

Hita then carefully examined the lock, which was of a peculiar pattern. Her feminine skill in expedients stood her in good stead at this time. The lock, she saw, might be broken or wrenched apart, but such a process would be very unwise. It would be better to rescue Hurotas without leaving any outside indications. Otherwise Elandos might prevent his permanent escape.

"Tomo, do thou go at once to Dystos, the worker in metals, and have him come quickly to fit a key to this lock. Bring him with thee, and much gold shall be his reward. I will wait for thy return."

The slave darted away with the fleetness of the ancient heralds, or the trained runners who announced the manœuvres of armies or the approach of royal visitors.

Hita waited as patiently and as bravely as possible through the trying moments, which seemed drawn out into hours. Such is the strange influence great suspense has upon time. But with remarkable quickness the slave returned with Dystos, having had the good fortune to find him in his shop.

As soon as Hita saw him approaching, she exclaimed with tremulous anxiety :

"Haste, O Dystos, and know, if thou canst fit a key to this strange lock, much gold shall be thy meed."

"Difficult and uncertain, O lady, will be the task," he answered, after he had examined it with extreme care ;
"but all my art shall be put to the test."

With the nicest precision and the greatest speed he filled the aperture with a soft substance which soon hardened. This, when removed, showed the perfect outline of the key.

"By the fanes of Etis," he exclaimed, looking at the model; "the goddess hath inspired this work, so perfect is it. In a few moments I can mould the key, and will bring and fit it to the lock," and he hastened out of the palace, the slave following him.

"The blessings of the gods be upon thee," said Hita gratefully, and she sat down to wait for his return.

Hope now rose in her troubled mind and partially relieved her solicitude, making the time seem short until the smith arrived.

So skilful was he that the lock opened at the first turn. "I will repay thee well, good Dystos," said Hita; "and now thou canst go." Then Tomo and the Carmine Bud swung open the heavy iron door, and before them stood the priest, pale and very weak, but with a holy smile upon his aged countenance.

"In the name of Etis and Ata, what can this mean, noble priest?" said Hita, with an anxious look.

"It means base wickedness, O lady, but I cannot tell thee now, for my tongue is weak, and my body faileth from exhaustion."

"Tomo," said Hita, "canst thou find a morsel to strengthen the priest?"

After partaking of some maize bread and a little wine, the old man was able to walk to the street. Tomo had selected the slave who helped bear the unconscious victim to the vault, and whose silence could be depended on, to provide a litter and assist in conveying the victim of Elandos from the palace to the home of Lenore. They

passed out through a private passage-way, and were far down the Avenue Rosetta before they met either friend or stranger.

Thus by the heroic act of the beautiful Carmine Bud, the godlike priest was rescued from a lingering death.

CHAPTER VI.

HUROTAS RELATES TO HITA HIS EXPERIENCES DURING
THE NIGHT OF PORTENT—HITA UNFOLDS THE DAY'S
OCCURRENCES TO LENORE—HUROTAS MAKES COM-
PLAINT BEFORE THE MAGISTRATE OF THE CITY.

HITA listened with breathless interest and unbounded astonishment to the priest's story. She had never felt much confidence in the Zoatian, and had suspected from the first his interest in Lenore ; but she was scarcely prepared to find him capable of such depths of wickedness, and had it not been for the imprisonment of this holy man, it would have been impossible for her to credit the tale.

"Wise priest," she said, "dost thou *know* that the dead woman was the betrothed bride of Elandos?"

"Aye, fair Hita," replied Hurotas. "I came at his special request, by ship, from Zoatia, to perform the marital rites, for I was the friend and counsellor of his youth. It has been many years since I knew the great high-priest, for he has been long in foreign lands, but ever I loved and trusted him."

"O ye goddesses, can it be?" exclaimed Hita. "It was but yesterday he came here in an anguished mood, and said that his sister, who was sojourning with him in the capital, had suddenly died, and he wished Lenore to weave a chaplet for the tomb. But oh, didst thou know

that Lenore's mother died suddenly also in that night of mysterious portent? Poor Lenore and her friends have gone to the last sad services of the dead, and I have remained to welcome their return." Then Hita told Hurotas of the communication of the kind-hearted slave, and the manner of her coming to the rescue. "And think-est thou the Zoatian is indeed a murderer, Hurotas?" the fair girl asked, desiring above all things to absolve him from this last most awful crime.

"By my faith in the gods, I believe it," replied the priest, as he took from the folds of his garment the kalos, and handed it to his companion, its diamond point dyed in crimson, and explained that it was a sacred instrument of the royal high-priest, and never left the Burning Sash of Belmeth except in adoration at her shrines. "By the shrines of all the gods, may retribution follow him; and if my knowledge and my power can aid in his punishment, they shall not be wanting." And as the old man closed his lips in fixed determination, his faded eyes almost regained their youthful fire.

"I believe as thou dost, and I will join thee to bring justice upon him," said Hita.

In the afternoon, when Hita was alone with Lenore, she unfolded to her the strange adventure and experiences of the morning, the rescue of the priest, and his own wonderful narration to her.

This disclosure was a great shock to Lenore, for she had placed much confidence in Elandos. Unlike Hita, she had been entirely unsuspecting of his real character, owing probably to the fact of his constant magnetic influence over her whenever he came into her presence.

"O Hita, this cannot be the truth," said Lenore. "I am sure thou hast been deceived."

"O Lenore, terrible it is, but true as that I live by the grace of Etis, and may justice mete out his punishment."

After a meal of nourishing food the priest slept for several hours. When he awoke, the dying sun had painted the west with gorgeous coloring, and the breath of evening lay soft and still upon the pellucid waves of the Selenella. He had determined, as soon as his condition permitted, to make a complaint against Elandos before the high magistrate of the city, and to openly charge him with the crime of murder. Duty would sanction no delay, and though still weak he felt called upon to make the accusation at once.

He spent some time in finding out the proper manner of procedure. This done, he went to the office of the high magistrate of Petoséga, in one part of the great amphitheatre of the Pnyx. This official had jurisdiction of all matters pertaining to the foreign part of the population.

"High minister of justice," said the priest, with great respect and dignity, after being ushered into the presence of the magistrate, "I appear before thee to make solemn accusation against a temporary resident of thy city, for the high crime of murder." He then related the circumstances in accurate detail, speaking in measured and solemn tones, with his left hand placed upon his heart, as was the custom of the time, and his right resting on the shoulder of the ivory statue of Etis.

"In the name of the solemn laws and inviolable human rights of the imperial Petoséga," continued the priest, "in the name and by the authority of the sacred fanes of Etis, whose beloved city has been insulted by a foreign hand ; in the name of all the sacred shrines of the goddess whose high-priest has poured out human blood ; in the name of all the people of the kingdom of Zoatia,

who have been disgraced and dishonored by a fellow-countryman ; in the name of that ancestral crown and sceptre forever polluted ; in the name of the sanctity of woman ; in the name of all the rights of life and liberty, I charge and do hereby make solemn accusation against the great high-priest of the goddess Belmeth. This priest, Elandos by name, bears the title and sacred appellation of the 'Sage of the Crimson Sash,' and is the last of the royal line of the house of Kormath, of the sovereignty of Zoatia. Him do I charge with the extraordinary crime of the murder of a woman, Zellota, his betrothed bride, on the twenty-first night of the eighth moon, coincident with the night and time of the strange phenomenon occurring in the southern heavens. I place myself, as witness and accuser, in the power of the city, and pledge my life and priestly honor on the integrity of this accusation. Witness, Belmeth, to the truthfulness of this my charge."

CHAPTER VII.

THE ARREST OF THE ZOATIAN.

THE funeral ceremonies had passed with no little degree of pleasure and satisfaction for Elandos. The elaborate burial car and the long train of carriages that followed elicited many inquiries from the Petoségans, who, in great multitudes, thronged the streets as the funeral cortège passed through the various avenues to the national Ceramicus. Few recognized the striking and distinguished-looking foreigner who sat silent and alone in the gorgeous equipage following the car. But rumors soon spread that he was the heir of a royal line of great renown in a far southern nation.

His mind was hopeful and tranquil, his conscience at ease, and, shortly after the twilight set in, he retired to rest without the slightest feeling of remorse or uneasiness. But a surprise was near at hand.

He had been sleeping but an hour or two when the slave on watch appeared at his door and announced that two gentlemen of distinguished appearance were in the great salon, and desired to see "Elandos, the Sage of the Crimson Sash."

"Conduct them to the library and say that I shall be glad to see them," responded the Zoatian, without the slightest suspicion of anything wrong. Some of the great Petoségans, he told himself, had come to do him honor and sympathize with him in his bereavement, hav-

ing discovered his princely character through the events of the day. So he arrayed himself in his most gorgeous tunic, and with a dignified but sad mien walked slowly to the library.

"Do the gods suffer us to see the great Zoatian of the royal house of Kormath, and called the 'Sage of the Crimson Sash'?" asked the chief spokesman.

"Noble Petoségans," replied Elandos, "I was born heir of Zoatia, and to me belongs the Crimson Sash."

"Then in the name of the sacred laws of Petoséga and by the shrines of Etis, I am commanded to place thee in the custody of the city upon the high charge of murder,"—and the officers advanced and placed their hands upon his shoulders.

"How dare ye make bold with the high-priest of the goddess Belmeth?" Elandos exclaimed; "what means this barbarous usage which thus exposes to ridicule a sovereign heir? Speak, I demand of ye!"

"Thou mayest vindicate thyself, O noble Zoatian, but thou must needs obey the voice of the law, the mandates of the imperial city," replied the elder officer.

"From whence cometh this charge of murder?" the prisoner inquired.

"This is not the hour nor the court, O priest, in which to discuss the question of thy arrest. Thou shalt offer thy answer in good time, and justice shall guard thee zealously."

The Zoatian drew back with violent protestations and fiery imprecations upon the head of his unknown accuser; but the guards led him away to a temporary place of imprisonment for the night, and there left him until the morrow.

CHAPTER VIII.

ESCAPE OF THE ZOATIAN—HE SEEKS THE PRIEST—THE
TERRIBLE RED HAND OF REVENGE AND LOVE—ELAN-
DOS RECAPTURED.

HUROTAS had spent an hour with Losmega, Lenore, and Hita on the beautiful portico of Lenore's palace which opened into the garden. There could, of course, be but one subject at this time—the tragedy. He told them of the formal charges he had made against the Zoatian. If these charges should not be sustained, his own life would pay the forfeit, but he was prepared even for this. If need be, he was ready to sacrifice his life to duty. The trial of Elandos would take place in a short time.

The day was the very perfection of loveliness. When the friends separated, the priest walked leisurely down the Avenue Rosetta, hoping to find in nature a solace for the past, and strength for the still greater trial that lay before him.

As he paced slowly through the street, he meditated upon the justness of his cause, and gave thanks that a wicked man, high in the honors of life, was now safe within the arms of the law and certain to meet the punishment that he merited. Though the past—the immediate past—was bitter in sad memories, and the near future presented an ordeal most trying in its nature, yet his mind was comparatively at ease. He had gone on almost

unconscious of the direction, as is often the case with one absorbed in momentous questions. He had turned several corners and was now in the neighborhood of the great prison of Petoséga, and near that part of it devoted to the custody of alien prisoners. The Zoatian had been transferred that very morning from the quarter he had occupied the preceding night to this apartment for foreign offenders, and Hurotas, as he passed by, wondered where the criminal might be. He walked on some distance further, finally turning into the Avenue Remelso, and was thinking of the extraordinary beauty of this thoroughfare, when he was startled by a rapid step and frantic voice from behind.

"Ye renegade of Belmeth, ye blasphemer of her temples, ye apostate villain, may the goddess smite thee with her vengeance, and her ministers reckon on thee her judgments ! Ye fallen priest, how dare ye weave lies against the wearer of the Crimson Sash ?"

The voice was that of the mighty Zoatian, who had at that moment escaped, and, catching sight of Hurotas, was pursuing him at the height of his speed.

When the priest heard the maddened cry he ran up the avenue, but his age and weakness made escape impossible.

"Die, ye apostate villain !" yelled Elandos in his fury, as he drew a sharp-pointed instrument from the folds of his robe and struck furiously at his intended victim. The priest bent backward and drew up his hands, parrying the blow, but receiving a severe wound on his right hand.

Losmega and Lenore had begun their morning walk on the Avenue Remelso from the upward terminus, and had strolled slowly down. Suddenly their attention was

attracted by the strange scene. "It is the priest pursued by the Zoatian," exclaimed the lovers. With a bound Losmega sprang to the rescue of Hurotas, and tried to tear the weapon from the hands of the Zoatian.

Unfortunately no one else happened to be in the vicinity, and it looked as if the enraged Lord of the Crimson Sash might kill both of the unarmed men.

"Lenore," exclaimed Losmega, "give the alarm, hasten to the Pnyx and summon the officers of the prison." Lenore hastened away, while, with the dexterity of the trained gymnast, Losmega seized the wrists of the maddened murderer, and forced him to drop the weapon which, in the weakness of his rage, he had used so ineffectually. The priest, bleeding from the wound in his hand and one in his breast, stood feebly by the side of his protector, ready to give what aid he could, should the Zoatian wrench his hands away. Frantic and furious were the exertions made by the bloodthirsty wretch to free himself, but Losmega held on with the grip of death. At last the strength of despair seemed about to triumph. One of the murderer's hands was free. A blow on the side of Losmega's head for a second almost stunned him, and released the other hand. Uplifted was the blood-stained stiletto in the strong hand of the maddened man, and soon would the gallant defender be cut down in helplessness like the prostrate Hurotas.

Then a deep stentorian voice rang out in tones that arrested him in his wrath and paralyzed the descending arm.

"Hold, ye destroyer of the laws, or ye die without mercy," and Elandos, turning involuntarily, saw a powerful man in a purple robe, upon a champing charger, rein up within four feet of him, with a glittering cimeter

in his hand. Such a sudden exhibition of authority unnerved the wily Zoatian completely, and at the command of the officer he proceeded to the prison, walking in the place of dishonor just ahead of the horse.

The Zoatian's escape from prison had been effected in a curious way, the gods having apparently favored him in a wonderful manner. The prison walls were thick and solid, the door massive, and the small windows were defended by iron bars which could defy any force. At Elandos's side hung a peculiar key, belonging to the vault of his palace. With a sudden inspiration the prisoner inserted this key in the formidable-looking lock, and found that it would do the work. After a moment spent in listening, and watching his opportunity, he cautiously opened the door and walked out into the street, once more a free man. Had it not been for this strange and sudden meeting with Hurotas, he could easily have escaped from the city. But rage is more powerful for defeat than the most high gods for success.

CHAPTER IX.

DAY OF TRIAL—ACCUSATION BY THE PRIEST—DEFENCE OF THE ZOATIAN—THE SOLMAS'S QUESTION OF INNOCENT OR GUILTY—ANSWER OF THE ASSEMBLY.

THE escape of the Zoatian and his mad attack upon the priest became known throughout the city. The whole history of the affair was thus noised abroad,—the grand funeral cortège and ceremony over the dead woman supposed to be his sister, the giving of the deadly potion to the priest, followed by the incarceration in the vault, Hurotas's charge of murder against him, his imprisonment, escape, and savage effort to slay his accuser. It created the intensest interest everywhere, and the approaching trial before the great assembly aroused the capital to the highest pitch of excitement.

At length the day of the hearing came, it being found necessary to make several postponements on account of the ill health of the priest ; but now he was able to take his great part of accuser. The whole metropolis apparently showed an eager interest, and before the hour the vast amphitheatre was filled with an anxious multitude. A short time before the assembly was to open, the innermost court devoted to the legislative body, the furnishings of which were in brilliant purple (the symbol of law and order, as before described), was thrown into the next enclosure given to the criminal court (whose symbol was crimson, for justice), so that both of the great courts

were now one vast semicircle for the great occasion. The gates between these two courts, with the long belts of crimson and purple, presented a magnificent sight. These two enclosures together made an immense space accommodating the two bodies—five thousand people in all—who were to be the judges in this grave assembly. They never sat together except in allegations of high crimes and misdemeanors.

The Solmas, the president of the assembly, took his seat on the raised platform. To his right sat the accuser, the priest Hurotas; to his left the accused, the last of the royal line of Kormath, Elandos. Spreading far out on either side of the high magistrate, and far in front, was the great concourse of judges, who, in due time, would have the vital question of innocent or guilty to decide. Any one in the assembly had the privilege of speaking and giving his opinion upon the accusation.

Elandos came in, under the care of uniformed guards, who sat around him in a half circle. The dark, fiery eyes glistened with intense hate as he caught sight of Hurotas. There was a slight nervousness apparent upon his face, but for the most part he was calm and collected.

The high magistrate rose and proclaimed formally to the assembly the cause of the meeting:

"Ye mighty judges, hear ye the solemn accusation, and determine as becomes truth and honor. Let simple justice guide ye in the decision. Elandos, the last of the royal line of the kingdom of Zoatia, standeth before ye charged with the highest crime—that of slaying a fellow-creature. A priest of the goddess Belmeth, of the same nation, is the accuser. Let Hurotas speak forth his charges."

The priest stood up, facing the statue of Etis, which was on the dais, and deliberately and calmly repeated the words of the formal charge he had already made before the Solmas :

“In the name of the solemn laws and inviolable human rights of the imperial Petoséga ; in the name and by the authority of the sacred fanes of Etis, whose beloved city has been insulted by a foreign hand ; in the name of all the sacred shrines of the goddess, whose high-priest has poured out human blood ; in the name of all the people of the kingdom of Zoatia, who have been disgraced and dishonored by a fellow-countryman ; in the name of that ancestral crown and sceptre forever polluted ; in the name of the sanctity of woman ; in the name of all the rights of life and liberty, I charge and do hereby make solemn accusation against the great high-priest of the goddess Belmeth. This priest, Elandos, bears the title and sacred appellation of the ‘Sage of the Crimson Sash,’ and is the last of the royal line of the house of Kormath, of the sovereignty of Zoatia. Him do I charge with the extraordinary crime of the murder of a woman, Zellota, his betrothed bride, on the twenty-first night of the eighth moon, coincident with the night and time of the strange phenomenon occurring in the southern heavens.

“I place myself, as witness and accuser, in the power of the city, and pledge my life and priestly honor on the integrity of this accusation. Witness, Belmeth, to the sincerity and truthfulness of this my charge.”

During all the time the priest was speaking, Elandos could be seen to make powerful efforts to suppress his rage and fear. He was allowed to answer this charge and make his defence. He rose with such a natural majesty of movement and grace of figure that he apparently won

the admiration of the multitude, though the judges were observed to remain unmoved and grave. The accusation of Hurotas sent a shudder through the whole assembly. The confidence that Elandos inspired at first was wonderful, and indeed there was much plausibility in the reasons he gave for the charge. But the reader shall hear him.

"Ye honorable judges," he began, with a grave and graceful gesture toward the great judicial throng, "the most superficial reasoner among you knoweth well that I am at a great disadvantage in this accusation. By a native bias of the human mind, I stand disfavored before you. Thus there might be predetermined judgment against me; but believing ye will count me a brother among you until at least I have made my plea, I deliver my answer.

"Ye will observe that they charge me with a most revolting crime—the murder of my betrothed bride. Think ye this is in any degree natural? Ye who have hearts and minds and sacred thoughts know that in the hour of Elysian joy such awful depravity is not possible to man. Let each of you recall that glad epoch, and question yourselves if there was such a thought as murder then in your hearts. Would ye not raise your spears to thrust down him that would charge ye thus? Then can ye think how great are my frenzy and rage? Oh, what injustice is this upon me! How would ye not thrust him to the lions! Would ye not rage against him that desecrated the temple of your hearts?"

Up to this time Elandos seemed to have the sympathy and confidence of the assembly, which were further heightened by the remainder of his speech.

"What, then, can ye imagine to be the motive of this charge against me, ye judges? Wicked ambition, ye

judges, which has often ruined the innocent in all lands. I hereby charge my accuser with greatest malice and envy. Long ere now ye have known that by honorable and lawful descent I am the last of a royal line, and by hereditary custom high-priest of our national goddess. It is indeed a high office, and many have been the strifes and intrigues wicked priests have engaged in to obtain the Crimson Sash; and I hereby charge this priest, my accuser, with the malicious desire to destroy the wearer of the emblem, that he might fall to this honor; for, owing to the recent changes in our nation, he would succeed me. He was my bosom friend, ye judges, but I have observed this malice and envy growing constantly, until now he hath been driven to these base accusations. When the usurper gained our throne, this priest endeavored to rob me of my dignities; and when this failed, he tried to contrive that I should lose my life in the wars. His disappointments, together with the fact of his fast-accumulating years, urged him on to obtain the object of his life by this murderous and wicked charge.

"Ye judges, the poor dead woman was my only sister, whose resemblance to me any one who saw her will recall. She was the victim of a terrible malady, and I was her attendant while seeking relief in your beautiful capital. But her death came suddenly, and she lies buried in your city, as you have witnessed. Therefore, ye honorable judges, ye perceive how base is the tale contrived against me. What atom of confidence can ye place in this my accuser? I appeal to your just and candid minds for the truth and justice of my cause."

The priest then supported his accusation by a long statement of the case,—how he came to be in the metropolis, and his whole experience since coming to the

city ; the strange visit with Elandos to the hado, which now had a peculiar meaning ; his visit to the Rocky Isle by request of Elandos ; then a careful account of his sudden return ; the strange, startling scene he witnessed in Zellota's room ; his convictions and search for the kalos ; his unconsciousness at the table of the half-moon with the Zoatian ; his awakening in the dark vault, and his rescue. All these facts the reader knows. Hurotas detailed them in a deliberate and decisive manner. The honesty of speech and bearing, as he went from one fact to another, slowly and surely carried conviction to the minds of the judges. The climax of evidence came when Hurotas, in speaking his last words, exclaimed :

"And this is the tell-tale instrument, ye judges," holding up the kalos of gold and opal ; "its diamond point is red with human blood, as ye that examine can know. I discovered it among the mattings, where I saw the Zoatian standing in the room of Zellota. Ye judges, what evidence more can ye need ?"

The beautiful but terrible witness was carefully examined by one after another of the judges. There was no effort at further argument. None was needed. The pendant was a sure witness, and so in addition was the tell-tale expression on the countenance of the amazed Elandos. He was entirely unprepared for this, and it stunned and unnerved him. And when the priest suddenly raised the kalos aloft in his hand, a death-like pallor passed over the Zoatian's face, while fear and fright sat on every feature. Many of the judges noticed this assertion of guilt, which nature could not hide. Finally, the officer in whose care the pendant was given walked about among the assembly, and held it up, that all might see it.

At length the Solmas rose, and with solemn dignity asked if there were any present who wished to speak for the accused. The vast concourse of people sat in hushed silence, and not an answer came. He waited a moment longer, then in a grave, full tone proclaimed :

“Ye honorable judges, ye have heard the accusation of murder, and the arguments in its support, made against the high-priest of Zoatia now in your presence, and ye have heard his defence. It is my solemn office to require your verdict and judgment. Think ye carefully, and when the hour-glass runs one-fourth its sands I will demand of ye your answer.”

The moments seemed like ages, but at last the magistrate said :

“Ye that believe in the innocence of the accused, rise with right hand uplifted.”

Only two or three were observed to stand.

“Ye that believe that the accused is guilty of the charge, rise with left hand uplifted.”

The immense body of judges, numbering five thousand people, rose together, as if by instinct, stood for a moment, and sat down. Then the Solmas, in accordance with the custom, pronounced the sentence.

“Elandos, the last of the royal line of Kormath, the sovereign house of the kingdom of Zoatia, high-priest of the goddess Belmeth, and wearer of the Crimson Sash, thou art found guilty of the charge of murder of thy bride, Zellota, and thou must suffer the penalty of death by decapitation, under the laws of the imperial Petoséga. When the morrow’s sun shall reach the middle sky, prepare for thy end. May the fanes of Etis and of Belmeth assist thee.”

CHAPTER X.

THE NOISELESS DESTINY—WHO SHALL HEAR HER FOOT- STEPS?

How strange are the interceptings of Providence in the affairs of men! How changed their destiny, how broken up and destroyed their plans and purposes! How noiselessly merciless fate unites the history of nations and of individuals! What human instinct is acute enough to hear her footsteps and escape destruction?

The sovereign city, with its vast multitudes, went to sleep in peace and pleasure, without the least suspicion of their great northern enemy. The ancient menace that cast its visage in such awful beauty on the sky, was drawing nearer and nearer. Even Elandos amid his guards was shrinking, not from the horrors of supernatural catastrophe, but from the terrors of justice declared by men.

The harbor of Petoséga (not the Selenella) opened to the north in the broad sea of Lossa, which was broken only by the Rocky Isle, while the mainland beyond ran far inland in a level plain. The tremendous Floating Mountain, the dread of ancient prophecy, extended for miles, filling up the immense plain. Slowly it had been moving from the Northland for ages, but when it reached the open surface it travelled with a velocity unexampled before or since. For this reason its approach had not

been discovered, although the chilly air of this evening caused here and there a remark of surprise.

When the tremendous mass struck the ocean waters, it separated into three awful mountains, by some mysterious force acting upon it, and another curious thing happened. Once in the water, all the three took another motion and revolved with great rapidity as they moved forward. No one can describe the progress of this leviathan-like foe. It threw the vast sheets of water high in the air, and tossed them into foam like the combined fury of a million sea-serpents. On it moved, gathering enormous momentum by every revolution. On it went like three monsters of the deep. Finally the one farthest eastward separated from the others by some invisible power, and tore up the very sea-depths in its mad career, like some huge behemoth venting its rage after being chained a thousand years. Then its course changed again, and it neared the other two, which had thrown up to the light of day for the first time the deepest secrets of the ocean. But the third mass did not join the others again until it had passed some distance from the Rocky Isle. On they marched as if all the disembodied spirits of the past were moulded into these mighty spectres. The ragged, jagged, white outlines, thrown against the black night, seemed like the weird jaws of death, for the first time embodied to mortal sight. On they whirled, more terrific and wild in their terrible revolving motions. The scene was of miraculous grandeur. Here were the terrible white monsters charging with tremendous impetuosity upon the habitation of men, clothed as it were with the passions, the envy, the malice, the hatred of a thousand generations, the evil and cruelty of all the past crystallized in these pale leviathans, bent on the wreck of

planets and the crush of races. Here and there the wailing tones of the Albatross were heard as they flew with frightened pinions across the continent of desolation. The waters were thrown into convulsed piles, blown into foam-clouds mountains high, and the frantic swells raged against the sides of the Rocky Isle, driving over her beetling crags and jutting brows, and tearing away huge fragments that followed the vast, retreating deep. The dreadful destruction wrought in that far ancient time may be seen to this day in the broken and serrated sides of Effelda ; and the great detached boulders still rise above the Lossa waves. On the mighty monsters rushed toward the devoted and unconscious city. Accompanying this chaotic desolation was a great shower of ice that fell like avalanches from the depths of heaven. These broken masses came down with terrific force, like crystal daggers from the frozen moon. Soon the northern enemy struck the great harbor of Petoséga, and the massive shipping was crushed into shapeless fragments and ground into infinitesimal particles. When the terrific foe reached the city itself, the momentum gained by its course through the ocean was so awful that it drove the great temple, the amphitheatres, the majestic thoroughfares, the very earth itself before it as the wind drives a feather. Nothing could stay its frightful progress. Such was the doom foretold in ancient lore, and the traveller of the modern day thoughtfully treads the track where went the wrath of the foe of olden times.

CHAPTER XI.

THE AWFUL DOOM OF PETOSÉGA—THE TERRIBLE NIGHT
OF ESCAPE—LENORE, LOSMEGA, AND HITA ARE
SEPARATED AND EMBARK ON DIFFERENT BOATS—
THE FEARFUL NIGHT OF DEATH AND SORROW.

It was not until their supernatural enemy was making its hideous whirling through the ocean, and all but upon them, that the Petoségans perceived their terrible danger. The night was dark, and the clouds hung in long sheets over the city. The stars were out, and the moon had hidden her face as if in evil deed. The only light from the heavens was the ghostly glimmer thrown on the darkness by the approaching spectres.

A shrill alarm was sent forth in all directions, and instantly all was bewilderment and dismay. The thoroughfares were filled with the multitudes struck dumb by the awful and strange emergency. Few fairly realized what the terrible danger was ; those who did had not presence of mind enough to use their senses, while the rapid progress of the foe gave little time for thought or action. At the sound of the alarm the guards threw down their lances, opened the doors of the various prisons, and left the inmates to themselves.

Elandos, ever watchful and alert, saw that some awful calamity was befalling the city. A ray of hope shot into his soul. What cared he for the anguish and danger of the Petoségans ? It might be that the gods had planned

their destruction to provide him with liberty. Once out of that detestable prison he felt that he was safe. So when the guards in their cowardice ran shrieking away, he simply drew his mantle about him, and walked leisurely out into the battle of the elements. Horrible as it was, it was yet a delightful change to this man, who had expected to die with the morning sun. He immediately saw that there was no time to lose, and with several others made his way as best he could to the shores of the Selenella, hoping to seize the boats anchored there and hurry away before the great enemy reached the bay.

Its surface now was dark, angry, and tumultuous. It seemed like Nature's great loom of waters worked by some invisible power, weaving the black robe of death for a race. The long ridges of billows in their majestic uniformity were as the throwing of her vast shuttle, while the dazzling shafts of silver woof, constantly rising and falling, vanished like the momentary flashings of doomed hope.

Wild and frantic fugitives were hurrying from every direction to the Selenella. Others were crouching in the porticos, not realizing their danger. Others, more bewildered, huddled in the streets, too stupefied to make any attempt for shelter or escape. On the faces of all there was a very ghastliness of fear that rendered them wild and haggard. Group after group met each other, and in hushed words inquired what the terrible calamity was. Wonderful were the human currents that swept down the wide avenues seeking escape. The structure of civilization was fast breaking up, and the only thought was self-preservation. Blindly and confusedly the wild masses went their way, heeding nothing but the prompt-

ings of refuge. Everywhere were seen nature's unfortunates, the blind, the aged, the crippled, the helpless, calling pathetically upon fellow beings for assistance, but it lessened not the speed of the flying throngs. The ties of kindred, friendship, love, had little recognition in that chaotic hour.

The pangs and agonies of the multitudes of brute and of human beggar all description : only the victims themselves can tell. The strong and rooted earth migrates as if inspired with sudden life, and her level plain is pushed into ranges of hills. Forests move before the resistless monsters as a field of reeds before the blast. Where are the innocent throngs that but yesterday peopled her radial thoroughfares ? They are gone, buried not like the rebellious god of old, under smoking *Ætna*, but under the freezing piles of arctic mountains.

All the while the crystal columns of the air were advancing, the white continents revolving in fury. The awful change from tropical to arctic zone chilled to death many of the weak and enfeebled. Losmega was among the first to hear the cry. He hurried to the palace of Lenore, and flew with her and Hita to the bay. In his search for the "Albatross," he was obliged to release his companions. A rush of hundreds to the landing forced Lenore and Hita apart, and they were borne on in different directions. Losmega shouted in vain. To make way through the maddened crowds was impossible. In his despair he endeavored to make fast the boat he had found, but at that instant them ultitudes had filled the vessels and swept out to sea, carrying his own boat with them. All was darkness—the waters black and angry—the winds blowing with frigid cold. Hita and

Lenore gave up finding each other or Losmega ; and knowing that they must die or escape immediately, got into the first boat they could find. On went the fleet in its mad flight for safety. In the many inevitable emergencies hearts were torn from hearts, and sorrow and deepest anguish filled the souls in these vessels. The lovers had little hope of ever seeing each other again ; and Hita's heart broke as she thought of losing her friends forever.

Fearful was this night of death and sorrow. The proud and imperial Petoséga lay in the cold embrace of the terrible northern glaciers. The beautiful metropolis met a strange and wonderful annihilation. The contending monsters swept over the whole city, grinding everything to atoms, throwing the earth into long ridges—which are now two ranges of hills—and spending its power in its own wreck. In all the records of human-kind there is not contained a parallel to this among the extraordinary and awful occurrences of nature. The complete and sudden doom of Petoséga, the queen of the generations, is the momentous event of thirty centuries, and the tremendous calamity shadowing itself in thrilling grandeur in the cloud-scene in the southern sky, the strangest and mightiest portent of the ages.

BOOK THE FOURTH.

CHAPTER I.

THE MORNING AFTER—THE AWFUL CHANGE OF A NIGHT
—THE NEW REIGN OF NATURE.

GRAND, yet awe-inspiring, was the appearance of the doomed city the morning after the destruction. There, in strange and terrible ruins, was presented the gigantic downfall of a kingdom. There, in grand wreck, were the hideous ice monsters which had produced the mighty cataclysm, their shattered and broken sides presenting vast surfaces of pure crystal. Here and there, projecting through the frigid piles, were the scattered evidences of a once proud and glorious capital. The gold globe of the massive Pnyx was struck athwart its centre, and the top portion, of rich brilliance, just emerging from the white and powdered ruins, lay like a crown upon the northern king. The rainbow arches of the great temple of Etis, forming a roof of resplendent grandeur, were torn apart at the apex. One half had fallen over and thrown out its inner side, and the rays of the morning sun, threading these meridians, made a scene of supernatural beauty, while all around a thousand prisms sparkled in the ruins. Never before had the human eye beheld such an array of color and magnificence of scene. Here and there some marble pillar lay upon the white

wreck, or some loved olive tree or myrtle crept with its green branches through the icy fingers of the foe. Now and then were to be seen fragments of the massive shipping carried from the harbor over the city. The delicious grove of Calla, with all its foliated beauty and works of art, was buried deep under the tremendous piles. The sapphire wall was crushed into myriad particles, and its scattered gems glistened in the morning twilight. Some of the great terraces, those farther inland, were torn away and hurled into ugly ridges, and remain so to this day. The powerful monsters had seemingly spent their force ere they reached those nearest the bay, excepting that some of the ice boulders were flung down upon them, and forever destroyed the beautiful outline of those they touched. Verily, the great and populous city was a vast whited sepulchre: her palaces, her temples, her public halls, her gardens, her meridian thoroughfares, suddenly becoming the catacombs of the mighty dead, while over them lay the majestic wrecks of a wandering zone.

Ah! what a scene was this! What a pathetic silence now reigned over that vast waste! The whole social fabric hushed peremptorily into unspeaking tombs. Not a living soul among her countless inhabitants left to chant an elegy or construct a tale. Where now was that glorious civilization?—that mighty system of society and laws? Gone like the vision of a dream, like the lost planets of a constellation, like the Pleiades from the heavens, taken imperatively from the economy of the world. No more was the imperial Petoséga to lead or to follow in the august progress of the nations. She went out like a meteor, and was dropped from her place by the magic of a mystic power.

And it is dreadful to realize the human side of this picture in this change of a night. A mighty people went to their usual rest—in the genial air of a southern clime. The breezes were laden with the perfume of their orange and citron fields. All around each happy home the olive and myrtle branches were gently swaying to and fro. The luxurious rose, the scented heliotrope, the smiling asphodel, freighted the soft wind. In the first half slumbering hour the marked victims of destiny, all unheeding, heard the songsters of brilliant feather weaving symphony and choral serenade. The cooing dove on the forest bough sent forth its melancholy notes amidst the music of the wood. The grand gardens were filled with a gorgeous wealth of flowers, shrubs, and vines, unconscious of the annihilation to be. The proud vessels lay at their quiet moorings, while over them the moon with her silver skiff was dashing through the fleecy heavens. The Rosetta, the Remelso,—all the great avenues,—stretched beyond the range of vision through the splendored plain; while, bending over them in arborescent loveliness, were unending lines of evergreens.

Aye, and how beautiful was the twilight of that fatal night! The calm, transparent sea of Lossa was lovely, its broad expanding surface unbroken save by a solitary ship that was fluttering in the slightest breeze. The sun had gone down in a gorgeous, golden brilliance, and the scene made one think of the escape of the golden fleece from Jason and the Argonauts. Altogether, never did a city sit in so much loveliness, so much grandeur, so much power, with evidences all around her of supremacy, and wrapped in the glory of the earth, as did Petoséga in that last twilight before the fatal darkness.

On all this tropical splendor came the awful change,

the new reign of Nature. The sun of the first morning after but slightly warmed the bleak winds of December. Here was the tremendous transposition of zones. The arctic had chased away the tropic clime, and here forever the frozen zone was to sit absolute three fourths of the year, in his wondrous mantles of whitened drifts. Erstwhile the moon did bathe herself in the warm, feathery depths of heaven ; but, under the new-born clime, she is wrapped in shivering gray. The benign faces of the stars now for half their courses stand cold and unfriendly in the silent sky. The color of cloud and water, the beauteous changes of celestial tinting, the lavender waves and the canopies of pink and gold, come now only in the summer time. The noble swan, in its dying lay, peals forth the most enchanting strains ; so an expiring zone went out in the sublimest setting.

CHAPTER II.

THE FATE OF THE ESCAPED PETOSÉGANS ON THE WILD SEA—THE FORTUNES OF LOSMEGA—FATE DRAWS LENORE TOWARD THE LIPS OF DOOM.

UNSPEAKABLE in sorrow and death was that awful night of escape. The great multitudes of Petoséga's inhabitants lay shrouded in crystal funeral piles. It was a vast burial ground of whited monuments cast up in a night, grander than the brain of artist ever conceived. Here was the eternal bivouac of a nation. The tremendous momentum had thrown the fragile mountains into curious shapes and forms. Here a mighty fragment had been riven off from the shattered side, and stood in the midst of powdered ice a glistening globe. There a large space looked as if the mighty tides of the sea had been suddenly made to stand still, no more to flow; and silence was the only requiem on this burial ground of wreck and death.

But while the countless throngs were sensible no more of pain and agony, the few escaping Petoségans were in the horrors of a boisterous sea, growing wilder and wilder, until it seemed to vie with the wrath of the ice-king on the land. Sudden blasts pitched many of the delicate craft into awful troughs, and the boiling water-mountains covered them forever. In the terrible blackness of sea and sky, the frantic vessels plunged into each other and

went down in the raging depths. Of those who did embark, but a small number lived through the night.

The noble and conscientious Hurotas was spared this agonizing experience. The exciting scenes that he had undergone during the preceding days had so depleted his strength that he had not the energy to try to escape, and he met his death in the stranger city.

For many tedious hours Losmega, who had embarked on the first boat he could find, was driven farther and farther out into the trackless waters, the ship entirely unmanageable in the high, running seas. Straight to death it seemed to take him. Terrible encounters it had with the great banks of waters in mid-ocean, and more than once it was struck amidships by other distracted vessels running the gauntlet for escape. Twice two huge galleys ran across his prow, and for a moment death seemed inevitable ; but the vessel righted each time, and renewed the race for life. Losmega had not the slightest hope of ever seeing Lenore or Hita again. For two delicate women there could be no chance of escape in the midst of such a maddened multitude, each one seeking at any cost his own deliverance from danger. It was not likely, Losmega told himself, that he could escape the awful peril of the sea ; and life, at this moment, and under such circumstances, was of small account.

In the mean time, Lenore and Hita found places in different boats. The Carmine Bud, with some others, found a place in a strong vessel, while Lenore at last took to a craft which proved very frail. By the exercise of considerable judgment and presence of mind, she had managed to break away from the crowd, and had found a boat just putting out which contained but one woman. A man was helping to free the boat, preparatory to em-

barking, when a frantic crowd pushed down to the landing. Knowing that the vessel would inevitably be sunk if he waited even to try and save himself, he unhesitatingly set her at liberty, and remained on the death-doomed shore. Lenore's companion, too frightened to hold on in the awful pitching and tossing of the black waters, was soon swept into the sea, and Lenore was left alone. She kept her presence of mind, however, and often righted the vessel when it plunged furiously on its beams. She had heard, during the long blackness of the night, the dying wails of hundreds of human beings. In vain she tried to catch some sound of those she loved. She was far out, with the wide sea all around her, when she perceived the cherished but changed Petoségan hills in the gray morning. This was the first full realization she had had of the awful catastrophe of the night.

Lenore's courage was invincible. She would do her best, she told herself, and die, if die she must, like a brave woman. The sea was now calmer, and she could discern objects upon its surface at a considerable distance. At last she saw what seemed to be a boat, heading exactly in her direction.

Faint hopes arose that it might be her beloved Losmega, and with an anxious and steady eye she watched the progress of the vessel. Nearer and nearer it came, and at last near enough for her to see that it was the "Albatross," Losmega's noble boat. There was the arched neck of the bird moving, life-like, toward her. O strange chance! Soon it was near enough to discern the occupant, and her head sank on her breast in utter despair. There were three men: two were seamen; the other a stately figure, with slightly careworn features and haughty mien. As the boat came close to her own

to render help, she was half inclined to spring into the waves rather than accept the gift of life from the hands of one she believed to be a murderer.

"Fair Lenore," cried the Zoatian, "I thank the gods that I have found thee safe ; that I can rescue thee from a terrible grave. What a strange and awful calamity ! By chance I seized a strong ship and these men to manage her, and as soon as the dawn came and the waters were quiet enough to venture outside, we unmoored our vessel from the coast, down on the left of the bay of Selenella, where we had found a fair harbor. I determined to seek my dear Petoségan friends, if indeed they were alive, and now I bless the gods that thou art safe ; and I would they were all rescued. Embark in our boat, fair Lenore, and escape these tremendous tides."

"O woe, woe is me !" cried Lenore, "here is the 'Albatross,' Losmega's noble ship ; but he is lost ! O woe, woe is me ! O miserable Lenore, and dearest Hita, for whom the waves have made a grave ! There is nothing to live for now. Let me seek refuge in the billows."

"Be consoled, fair one," said Elandos, "thou and I art saved ; perchance the others will be found. Flee from the angry sea."

With a weakened frame, and a soul filled with fresh anguish, she allowed herself to be helped aboard the "Albatross." How could she accept the offices of one who had been convicted of the highest crime known to civil law, the murderer of his bride ?

"Thou art kind," she said, "and I accept thy rescue. But, O Elandos, how didst thou possess this noble ship ? I saw not a living soul, and thought all were buried in the terrible ruins, or devoured by the engulfing billows. How comest thou by the 'Albatross' ?"

"Fair Lenore," the Zoatian replied, "I saw the danger, and was one of the first to rush to a vessel, and finding two men, got them aboard and hurried away before the great tumult. Our course being luckily parallel with the coast for miles downward, we reached at last a curve with a fair harbor; but our boat was dashed to pieces, and we swam ashore; and very early in the day I saw this vessel at some distance, deserted, but drifting uninjured, and we brought it to shore."

"O he is lost, he is lost!" cried Lenore, "this is his loved boat, and he has met death. O woe is me, woe is me!"

"Fair maiden, think not so; perhaps he did embark on some other vessel, and thou shalt see him again. But thou dost need something to strengthen thee. This bread and meat, which we found at a poor fisherman's hovel, will keep thee alive. Soon we shall reach some town or city; meanwhile replenish thy strength, fair Lenore, the last of the daughters of Petoséga."

Even in that most sad, uncertain, and perplexing hour, Lenore ate gratefully of the food offered her, for the weaknesses of hunger are stronger than the scruples of conscience.

While this situation was trying and heart-rending, she would at least appear grateful to this powerful man, wretch though he was. But she realized her thralldom, and even at this most trying moment began to think how she could extricate herself. For the present she would show no displeasure.

To the Zoatian, however, these circumstances gave the greatest delight. He had rightly read his stars, despite the many times he had distrusted them. Verily in their courses they were fighting for him. When sentenced by

a malicious foreign enemy to die, had they not liberated him?—perchance destroyed a kingdom to accomplish it. Was not here the greatest evidence of their good will? What a triumphant hour! Here, in the same vessel, was the dearest object of all the earth to him, the woman for whom he had severed every relation of life, for whom he had murdered the woman who adored him. Here was the glorious creature in his very grasp, helpless, friendless, alone; yea, dependent upon him for her life. He had nothing to fear. Petoséga lay in ruins, beyond all resurrection. The priest, Losmega, Hita, and all the others were dead, and silenced forever. His own life was doubly spared: spared from civil law, spared from the angry sea; and now the woman, for whose sake he had stained his soul, was almost in his arms.

“Lenore,” he said to himself, “must be my bride. But time itself will unfold the measures to accomplish this, and for the present I must deal very gently with her.”

The vessel speeded on, but Lenore knew not whither. She little knew what perils, what awful experiences, awaited her in the near future.

CHAPTER III.

THE CARMINE BUD—THE BLESSED ISLES—THE TEMPLES
OF ATA (LOVE), HIVA (VIRTUE), RITA (TRUTH)—THE
SUCCESSFUL SUPPLICATIONS OF HITA.

GREAT was the anguish of the Carmine Bud when she found herself upon the raging ocean, every instant in danger of death. But, like Lenore, she was strong of soul. She had been pushed into a vessel with a struggling, maddened mass of humanity. Many of the affrighted creatures had drowned in embarking, many more had turned back in their frenzy ; and so it came to pass that Hita, at the break of day, found herself, like Lenore, alone on the raging sea. But the waters gradually subsided, and when the sun was high in the heavens, her heart was gladdened by a vision of land.

It was a glimpse of the Blessed Isles, and came to her like a rapture. The boat seemed slowly and surely drifting toward the shore, the wind taking it into the shelter of the south side of the islands. The waters were so calm here on this leeward shore that she easily ran her craft upon the beach, and proceeded to find some of the inhabitants of the islands. She was not entirely unacquainted with them, having been there several times in the happy years before. These Blessed Isles were the gems of the ancient sea of Lossa. There were three of them, and they were the veritable graces of the ocean. They were far away from other land, and were so situated

that they could be seen for a great distance when the air was rarefied. They occupied but a small space in the sea, not more than half a mile in diameter, and their shore line was most peculiar. The wealth of forest was beyond anything seen in that day. Nature had been bountiful in her gifts. One of the features that fascinated the eye was the perfect fringe of pomegranate trees, forming a gorgeous girdle of mingled gold and green most charming to behold. Such was nature's magnificent skirting; and the stately trees of many kinds, towering in unbroken lines far toward the sky, made the scene a heavenly one. This natural form and beauty suggested the plan of the temples. These isles were really three in one, yet unconnected except in the centre, each having its own outlines entire. The temples Ata (Love), Hiva (Virtue), and Rita (Truth), were grandly beautiful. The very sight of them, as Hita found herself in this elysium of rest and beauty, gladdened her heart and comforted her spirit. There were no aliens allowed upon the islands.

There is a beautiful and touching tradition regarding the Blessed Isles. Far back in fabulous times, when things on earth were new, there was a tremendous strife between gods and goddesses of all the heavenly spheres,—according to the legend, the greatest of all the wars of the immortals. The cause was this: Among the gods there grew in the course of time a deadly enmity against three of the divine goddesses, Ata, Hiva, Rita, love, virtue, truth, and they were determined to expel them forever from the supernal abodes. The great concourse of the blessed goddesses, one and all, united and challenged the cause of their berated sisters. For a brief time there was an attempt to end the strife in some way by arbitra-

tion, but this failed, and a deadly war began. The scene of the terrific combat changed, as victory changed sides. Sometimes it raged in the heavenly regions amidst the emblazoning of thrones, sapphire banquet halls, diamond coronets, and golden crowns. Sometimes, when the cause of the gods was high, the warring host stood on seraphic wing far over the immortal battlements, in ethereal zones, and with helmet, sword, and shield, struggling and fighting for mastery. At length the anger of the gods grew into vengeance, and they determined not only to expel the three goddesses from heaven, but also to put them to death ; this new object kindled their action into fierceness, the while also grew the zeal and courage of the goddess throngs for their divine sisters. Finally, victory began to favor the gods, and battle after battle took place in the clouds, farther and farther away from celestial realms, and nearer human confines, and fierce and more fierce were the assaults on the immortal souls to destroy the three hated goddesses.

The encounters now being so terrific, the goddesses in council determined upon a ruse to save their sisters from imminent death. The immortal amazons formed a hollow square, curtained it with clouds, and with the persecuted sisters concealed in the midst, descended rapidly to the sea, over which the last severe conflict had taken place, and, having reached it within a short space, their grand leader heralded the waters into a stairway, and the besieged goddesses disappeared, in the forms of mermaids, in the deep. This was done, and they were ascending again the ethereal planes, ere they met the pursuing gods ; but the sublime army of the goddesses, now released from the care of their sisters,

renewed the contest with redoubled force, drove the gods to the very portals of paradise, took the celestial battlements from them, and gained an unconditional victory ; and afterward, so runs the fable, peace reigned eternally in the heavens ; their sisters were metamorphosed again into resplendent goddesses, and to honor the place where they escaped these beautiful islands were made to rise from the sea. Such is the pretty legend.

The Carmine Bud soon reached the priestesses of the temples, detailed her story, found food, shelter, and rest. She was received with most tender kindness, and by the next day she was rested much from her fatigue. She determined to go to the shrines in each of the temples, and offer a solemn and earnest supplication to the three goddesses for the preservation of her only earthly friends—the only ties that she had in life, Lenore and Losmega. She had escaped herself from destruction, and it might be that the dearest of earth might also be saved. Here is her tender prayer :

“O goddess of Love, humbly would I seek thee in thy realm. Great boon I have to ask of thee. Thou, goddess, art the author of the most blessed human ties, and by silver threads thou bindest together our hearts. The hearts die when the silver threads are broken. Two souls are lost to me by a strange fate, and I pray thee they may yet live and come back to me. Great goddess, hear my prayer !”

And in the temple of Hiva, thus she prayed :

“Divine and holy goddess, thou it is that dost grant to our race the boon of sacred virtue. Defend, protect, I pray thee, thine own self, mirrored in the daughters of men. There is one dear to me : in the dark ways of her destiny, I pray thee, emblazon around her thy impenetra-

ble light, and blast him that would do her wrong. Gladden my eyes with the sight of her once more. Great goddess, hear my prayer ! ”

And at the shrine of Rita she thus besought :

“ Resplendent among the immortals, O Truth, I implore thy aid. My heart is swept with calamity, and torn from me are my friends. O goddess Truth, thou that dost prevail over chance and death, restore to me those I love. Thou, that dost right all things at last, hear my prayer.”

Such was the earnest outpouring of Hita's heart for her dear friends' lives and their recovery to her. In the nobleness of her soul it ought to have been answered. Here was total denial of self ; in all this supplication not a word for herself, not a thought for her own happiness or good fortune. Trusting almost against reason that all would be well, she determined to do all in her power to find her friends. A hopeless task ; yet it was all she lived for, and in such a cause her life would be well spent if spent in vain. Apparently she went at the undertaking blindly, but there was an unseen something that guided her.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RUBICON OF LOVE—THE SWORN PASSION OF ELANDOS—LENORE BECKONS TO HER FATE.

IT was now the morning of the third day since Lenore had accepted her life at the hands of the evil Elandos. They had been constantly sailing, except during the nights when they had fortunately found food and shelter with the poor fishermen's families along the shore. The Zoatian did not yet permit the vessel to go far out to sea, but made for the most part a coast voyage. The water was tranquil, but cold, and Elandos had provided Lenore with some humble wrappings from the huts they had visited. They had reached no civilized community as yet, nor were they in the line of communication with sea-going vessels. For long distances south of Petoséga the country was almost unsettled and unknown. Far to the south were other kingdoms and races; and some of these lands Lenore was anxiously hoping to reach.

So far Elandos had acted the part of a kind and gallant protector, and shown his companion every kindness and attention that befitted the circumstances. But on the third day there was something different about his manner, and her quick feminine intuitions took fright at once. His care had suddenly come to mean more than kindness, and this knowledge made her sick at heart. Her terrible situation dawned on her now in a new light. Fate had thrown her into the hands of a man who had saved her

life, but only to possess it himself. What she should do she did not know. There was only one comfort. Death could relieve her if, living, she would be compelled to prove false to plighted love. Horrible was the thought ; but that she should be driven to action in the near future seemed certain.

The outward expression which Lenore dreaded soon came. The passion of this bad man had been known to himself only, for all these momentous weeks. Now he would make a confidante of the object of his passion. There was a wonderful fitness about this arrangement, and the Zoatian smiled as he silently thanked the gods. Lenore had been most gracious in her manner, and could not but respond to the affection of the preserver of her life. So, leaving a slave in charge of the vessel, he went to the end of the boat, and seated himself beside her.

"Fair Lenore," he said softly, and the magnetic power of his manner told infinitely more than his spoken thought, "how sad appears thy destiny. Thou art left alone by the cruelty of fate ; thy friends are swept from thee. My heart has grieved for thee in thy loneliness, and I could weep over thy condition. What soul, knowing thy experiences, would not live in pathetic thought for thee ? Thy fair native land so strangely destroyed, thy earthly kin and friends buried forever in nameless graves ! Surely, dearest Lenore, thou dost need a protector. Lenore, thee I love, and thee I love alone. In the face of thy sad desolation do not refuse my affection."

"Wise Elandos, I cannot permit thee to address me in this manner," said Lenore, blushing in anger and perplexity, "but I believe thou wert born too noble to take advantage of my lone condition. I can accept nothing but kindness from thee. Think not that I forget that I

owe my life to thee ; I am grateful above all power of words to tell, and shall ever be too helpless to repay thee but in words of thankfulness."

The Zoatian was somewhat confused by this display of character and firmness ; yet he was not dismayed, for she was in his power.

"Fair Lenore," he said, "cruel fate has forever severed the tender ties that thou didst have ; reconcile thyself to thy destiny and tune thy trembling heartstrings anew. Thou wilt not prove untrue to the dear ones of the past if thou dost lighten thy lot by creating other ties. Thou must not walk the earth alone, beautiful Lenore."

"Leave me on the barren sand," said Lenore with spirit ; "I must not listen to this language."

"O Lenore," said Elandos, gazing fondly upon her, "hearken to me, to one who adores thee. Since first I saw thee on the marble terraced landing that moonlit eve, I have struggled vainly with my love. See, destiny has declared that thou shalt be mine. Ere the doom of Petoséga, I saw thou didst love another, and my love I did stifle in my breast. Thou shouldst never have known it had not this strange fate brought us together. Thou wert given to me by the gods. Thou must be my bride, my queen, the goddess of my life, and on earth's proudest throne thou shalt sit ; for the lore of the stars tells me my ancestral crown shall come back, and the tyrant be driven from my realm. My native land, far in the Mosetta seas, is glorious, beautiful as the fabled land of youth. There thou shalt have dominion over the seas and the earth, and the people of many climes shall bow before thee."

Alone with this subtle and powerful man, Lenore knew not what to do. A vision of the awful crime of which he

had been guilty passed swiftly before her eyes, and in that moment she realized that there was nothing but cruelty to be expected from such a man ; but her self-possession did not desert her, and she replied in an unwavering tone :

“Elandos, I have loved another,” and the roses came to her pale cheeks. “Be he dead or living, I love him still. I shall never love again.”

There was an heroic firmness in her words that gave no hope of change. Elandos perceived the utter failure of his suit, and an expression of defiance came over his face like a shadow over a field in June, but was as quickly dispelled. Lenore saw it and trembled.

“Dost thou cast away in disdain these great proffers ?” said the Zoatian, struggling with passion.

“Think not, Elandos, I am unaffected by this high homage, or that I am not honored by these offerings of thy heart and fortunes ; but I cannot, aye, I *cannot*, recall the sacred devotion of the past.”

“Then, by the gods !” exclaimed Elandos, turning away as he spoke, “the fates shall break thy stubborn nature ; and here I swear that thou *shalt* be the bride of Elandos, renowned in the far Mosetta. Ho, sailors ! to the Southland !”

CHAPTER V.

THE SUFFERINGS OF LOSMEGA ON THE HIGH SEAS—
CAPTURED BY A PIRATE SHIP—LOSMEGA FLOATS
ON A SPAR TO A VOLCANIC ISLAND.

SEVERAL days have passed, and Losmega, like Ulysses, has been a wanderer on the deep, many times nigh unto death. His vessel had encountered such currents of winds that he was driven into those regions of the sea less frequented by trading ships, but infested by pirates. His craft shot over the hazardous crests, and now he was far from the great white burial plain which was once his home.

He had been battling with the waves for days in this way when he had an experience of a different nature. Suddenly one morning, far off to his right, he sighted a dark object of considerable size, which soon proved to be a ship. It was going rapidly, and running in a direction across his bow. When it came near he saw that it was a pirate vessel. The boat itself was enough to inspire terror in the stoutest heart. Its form was peculiar, and painted in a barbaric black that gave one a sense of cruelty and lawlessness. Its bow ran into a hideous beak, patterned after the revolting vulture. The decks were very narrow ; and spiked on them, so that they projected out and over, were enormous talons and mighty claws of gigantic birds that had once swooped the earth and sea for animal or human prey, and lived in the vast,

dismal marshes and labyrinths of swamps ; and the boat's canvas was figured with weird and shocking designs.

As the boat of our hero neared this curious vessel with its revolting trappings, he felt a faintness as he saw into what a frightful situation he had fallen. Here was an ugly boat, with a demoniac insignia and a barbarous crew. The men were bronzed and hard-featured, in suggestive harmony with their surroundings. Losmega had measured their weird vessel in a few glances, and hoped to pass by unheeded and unheeding, when a fierce voice rang out sharply :

"Ahoy ! where go ye with ye frail craft ?" and the whole crew leaned over the decks and gazed at the solitary boatman.

"I am a stranger," said Losmega, "driven by cruel fate to exile on foreign shores."

"What wares of precious weight are ye freighted with ?" said the first speaker, with an air of authority.

"I bear no silver, nor gold, nor precious thing except my life," replied Losmega.

"We will save ye from ye hard sea fare in ye small craft," imperatively said the chief. Then, turning to the crew, he ordered "a head-line, ye men ;" and again addressing Losmega, "ye stranger, board our boat."

Although this command chilled the blood in Losmega's veins, it was not unexpected. So he prepared himself to endure the ordeal of slavery, torture, or death. He looked for bare servitude, and he was right ; but though cruel, it was short. They pulled him up over the decks by means of a tarred towline, and his pretty boat was hauled on board and eyed with much curiosity.

"Ye enter our bondage forever," was the startling edict, as the commander again spoke, after some moments

of solitary staring. "And ye shall become as dark and mighty as we. Time shall change ye soft, white features, until ye shall look like a man. Our fare is hard, ye stranger," continued the commander, "but it makes ye giants of the ocean. Six ordeals ye shall have each living day, until ye sinews are like as steel, and ye muscles like as forged iron."

These veterans in hardship and crime had long ago lost every human quality. They came to their horrible tasks as easily as the clergyman to his sermon. They were no longer sensible to the terrible experiences of initiation into the modes of life which they compelled newly selected captives to undergo; and with a rough and rude direction they began, without hesitancy, the regular ordeal.

"Ye men," again spoke the chief, "make ye stranger of ye order of ye sons of Neptune, and a grand and mighty one will ye stranger make. Have no delay."

With this Losmega was taken in charge. His fine clothing was taken from him, and rags substituted.

This transformation, however, was the slightest part of the fearful experiences to which he was destined. The food was indescribably hard and filthy, consisting of decayed meats, and black bread, dried in the sun.

Losmega's first terrible ordeal was with an instrument of torture, facetiously termed the "diving-bell." "Bring hither," said the captain, "ye diving-bell, and fetch ye stranger to aft." The diving-bell proved to be nothing more than a net-work of tarred ropes, made in such a way as to fit over the shoulders and around the waist, so that it could not possibly be removed. This net-work went no farther than the waist, and held the hands immovable.

"Put ye diving-bell on ye stranger," said the chief. "Fear not; thou shalt be acquainted with ye hard waters and ye strugglings of the deep," he added, as he saw the blanched face of Losmega.

The men then walked with their captive to the stern, and, lifting him over the railing, gradually lowered him by the rope into the water. As soon as his feet touched the waves they suddenly slackened the rope, and down he sank into the salt depths. Then, hand over hand, they began to pull him up, and when he reached the deck he was exhausted and half strangled. An hour was given for rest and recuperation, and then the terrible ordeal was renewed. Again he went over the gunwale; again he plunged through the foaming brine, helpless, in his cage of tarred rope. This astonishing programme consisted of three excursions into the deep. The last time Losmega was unconscious. This pleased his devilish companions, and they shouted with pleasure. They were skilled in resuscitating drowning persons, for Losmega soon revived, and was allowed to rest on a pile of skins. To help his quick recovery and return of spirits, they gave him some light-colored wine, apparently made from boiled or pressed wild berries.

Some hours now passed; then came the ordeal of initiation in the Brotherhood of the Sun. This always occurred when the fierce, tropical sun was at its hottest. These barbarians had a rude yet effective contrivance for this purpose. In the bow of the vessel was located the appliance. It consisted of a vast, metallic, tunnel-shaped machine, converging downward to the deck, leaving space enough in the middle for a man to stand. This huge apparatus gathered the rays of the mid-day sun, and terrible was the heat it condensed. The victim was

ordered to stand in the centre, and the side, that appeared as a door, was closed. This curious contrivance was surrounded by the pirate savages, while the poor suffering mortal, without a thread of protection upon him, was burning up with the fierce and peculiar heat. Poor Losmega, clothed only in nature's dress, was placed in the middle space, the door closed, and he was ordered to slowly turn around in order that the skin on all parts of the body might be tanned and toughened alike. Strict watch was kept as to the condition of the victim; and when suffering almost to exhaustion, he was taken out, rubbed with cooling oils, and then, after a rest, the torture was resumed. This initiation was intended to prepare one for all experiences under tropic suns and the various perils of this wild life.

The fourth terrible trial was called "the masking of the fates." It was designed to train one to meet heroically every possible adventure or danger. Naked as before, except for a band of skin about his waist, he was blindfolded by means of a coarse woollen cloth tied around his eyes, and then was compelled to obey the word of the commander.

"Count sixteen paces and walk briskly to aft," rang out suddenly the stern voice of the chief, as Losmega was stationed in the middle of the vessel. He did as ordered, and when making the seventh step, plunged headlong over the gunwale into the sea. The crew were ready to rescue him instantly, when he should rise to the surface. Seeing that he was all right, the chief gave the second command.

"Stand at ye stern, and take six paces quickly to bow," he said in imperative tones.

Losmega thought this must prove an agreeable sur-

prise, for six paces would take him to the middle of the vessel. So he went ahead in confidence, but quick as a flash his footing was gone, and he plunged helplessly into the deep hold of the ship. He fell, however, on a pile of skins, so his injuries were only bruises.

Then came the ordeal of the fire-brand. The victim, still stripped of all apparel, was given a bath of salt and water. Then they bathed him from head to foot with an acid liquid from a horn. It was colorless, but burned terribly and darkened the skin. Poor Losmega writhed under this, and wished for death. Successive applications made the skin look old, and gave it a leathery fibre, from which it could never be restored to its original nature. This was designed to fortify the flesh against disease, bruises, poisons, and contagions.

But a mysterious providence intervened to change this awful destiny. Perhaps the prayers of the Carmine Bud reached the throne of the blessed goddess, and were graciously answered. It is beautiful to believe this, at all events. Losmega was released from the hands of his persecutors, after suffering one day in the terrible process of initiation. The next morning there was the usual tropical heat, but there was a strange appearance about the sun. The sky was for the most part cloudless, but here and there were irregular patches of vapor floating high in the heaven. There was a frightful and unnatural calm. All life appeared to be taken from nature: everything seemed dead, and there was not a breath of air. This proved to be a lull before a terrible hurricane. The pirates well knew the meaning of this state of the atmosphere, though they were hardened to the experience, and withal careless. So careless, indeed, were they, that they did not regard the warning of

nature, nor make the slightest preparation to meet the approaching tempest. In fact, they were proceeding to conduct Losmega through the second ordeal with the diving-bell. He had on the pirate suit, and they had just led him to the stern where the rope was being uncoiled, when a gale struck the vessel, like an electric flash. The men ran to the halyards to lower the canvas, and Losmega rushed to the mainmast, but the sails were never lowered. The hands of fate had reached out from the invincible, and transformed the canvas into death-shrouds. It was a terrific blast; an immense body of air whirling about an imaginary axis inclined to the horizon with an awful velocity, while its progress over the ocean was frightful to behold. The barbaric ship was caught in the vortex, and literally twisted into fragments. The revolving mass of air made an enormous funnel down far into the depths of the sea. The gale lasted but a few moments, but it destroyed all that was made by hands. The resistance of the atmosphere outside the whirling tempest checked it at last. But it had traversed miles, and when the calm came the wreck was floating near the volcanic island. Through all the fury of the elements Losmega clung to a spar, which proved to be the mainmast, near which he had stood when the storm struck the ship. His companions he never saw again. The spar fragment was large; and seeing the island which he had discerned days before, with great difficulty he half floated, half propelled himself to it. Where he reached the shore the water was somewhat shallow, and in leaving the spar he noticed a bundle tied to the further end, and found that it was his own apparel, which the commander had lashed to the mast—for what purpose he did not know.

The island was of a peculiar and singular construction. It consisted, in the first place, of various formations of rock. There was no living thing upon it anywhere—tree, shrub, or flower, grass, weed, or moss—and the whole island was very small, not more than a quarter of a mile wide by half a mile long. Most of it rose abruptly from the sea to the height of four hundred feet, running inland into a slightly dished table-land. Running haphazard in every direction over the whole formation were vast rents made by some force, as if here the Titans had contested. It appeared as if terrible sulphuric thunderbolts had come down upon the island and blasted it by their awful power. The face of the shattered rocks had a ghostly grimness where the terrible agents of vengeance had struck. Here and there, amidst the blackness, were shooting rays of light color, showing where the fumes of wrath had left their eternal impress.

When, after recovering from his fatigue, he began the ascent to the table-land, a most curious phenomenon was presented to his view. Rising to the great height of three hundred feet from a circular aperture in the dished surface of the rocks, was a sheet of flame; but what was most singular, it was without smoke or smell. This aperture was a bottomless abyss, and mighty in extent, two hundred yards or more in diameter. The whole orifice was filled with this fire, rising with a tremendous force upward toward the sky. Such a vast accumulation of liquid flame held the observer in stupefied wonder. And more remarkable still, the flame had a most beautiful roseate hue, and as it ascended it seemed as if all the essence of beauty was being melted into a spirit form. This sight was both enchanting and terrifying, and Losmega proceeded no farther in discovery, but retraced his footsteps down the slanting rock.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ARIADNE THREAD OF HITA—THE MINARETS OF ZOATIA.

AFTER Hita implored the goddesses of Virtue, Truth, and Love, in their temples on the Blessed Isles, for the safety of her friends and their return to her, she felt confidence in their ultimate preservation, and determined to spend her life, if need be, in the attempt to find them. She made haste to embark on the quest, long or short as it might prove to be.

A moderate-sized vessel was rigged out by the aid of the priestesses, and three slaves, as sailors, were provided for her. It was a hazardous undertaking, but in it she would find her only happiness. Two days after she landed on the isles, with this outfit she began the expedition.

She directed the course of the ship to the south, and a little to the east, for she had observed that the path of the northern enemy was southward, and she had ordered the vessel slightly to the eastward, to escape the pirate seas. This she thought was the direction to take, whether it brought good or evil. It proved to be an opportune choice, for she had been out only about two days when the first clew or intimation of the existence of Losmega gladdened her soul. A large vessel steering to the north-west passed her own within speaking distance, and she thus hailed it. She implored them to tell her what they had seen in the waters they had left behind them.

"O sailors, tell me true, what have ye seen of man or ship?" said Hita, with wistful look.

"Fair maiden," replied the captain of the crew, for it was a trading boat, "nothing have we seen of good omen. Far to our port we discovered, or what we took to be a pirate vessel, and by its side, a sloop; and from it they were taking on board a man or woman, which we could not tell, for we were far away. We quickened our speed, and looked no more. To the south-east was the dark, volcanic island, famed, fair priestess, in those pirate waters. No farther knowledge have we. Hast thou lost a friend?"

"Noble stranger," returned Hita, "yea, I have lost a friend. The gods bless thee, thou hast directed me," and with a gentle courtesy she waited no longer, but ordered the slaves to hasten the course.

Such were the slight, vague means of guidance that the Carmine Bud had found; but it proved an Ariadne thread, that led, after much tribulation, to the golden goal.

We will pass over the hardships, the narrow escapes, the terrible perils of the deep of Lenore and the evil Elandos, in the good ship "Albatross." We will omit the vain remonstrances, the useless resistances; the imploring, the beseeching, and the begging of the helpless woman, for her freedom and her life. But all, tender, pitiful, grateful, they fell in weakness on the unyielding, flinty, selfish nature of the Zoatian. One thought, one theme filled all his heart. Lenore must become the bride of the Sage of the Crimson Sash. Toward this doom the fate seemed to lead her.

The faithful "Albatross" had brought them now to the glorious southern country, to the beautiful, genial kingdom of Zoatia, in the far Mosesta Sea, now the South

Pacific. This was an extensive and powerful nation, which has no counterpart in modern history.

Lenore hoped that when land was reached she could in time plan effective means of escape. In the same vessel with her captor attempts were useless, so for the present she had ceased resistance.

When the "Albatross" was within four or five leagues of the harbor, the great minarets and domes of the famous capitol began to appear in the glistening sunlight; the gold, bronze, and ivory finishings of the grand and magnificent structures producing far across the waters the most brilliant effect in the mid-day radiance; while the dark wrapping of cloud that just reached over the city, under the reflection of the violet sky, seemed like an amethyst setting to the vast ring of the sea.

When they came near, in the very shadows of its towers, they heard the din of battle and the horrid conflict of war. Elandos knew at once the meaning of this, for he had received intelligence that the supporters of the royal house of Kormath had gained greatly in power and strength, and were attempting the expulsion of the usurper from the throne; that the prospect of ultimate victory was assured, and that, as his royal father was no longer living, he himself should be elevated to the kingship. This was the good fortune that Elandos referred to when, in his wooing of Lenore, he told her he would become the ruler of a great people, and that a diadem should deck her brow. The clang and the tumult of the engines of war came nearer and clearer to their ears. The occasional fall of towers under the attack of the mighty battering-rams came to them as the voice of the devastation of warfare. The shrill bugle notes summoning the relief forces told of the intensity of the conflict. The

wild rush of the chariots on the stone pavements of the streets gave evidence of the brutality of battle, while the flying groups of chargers, with the frantic cries of their riders, showed how awful was the struggle for victory ; and the lumbering troops of elephants through the thoroughfares characterized the military science of the age. The terrible conflict was turning against the usurping dynasty. The beautiful pendant of the Zoatians, consisting of a triangular gold field filled out with blue to an oblong figure, and the goshawk on spreading pinion, was floating proudly and victoriously from parapets and towers, while the enemy's flag was nowhere to be seen. The fierce decisive battle was just in progress as the "Albatross" reached her moorings early in the afternoon. Elandos had faith always in his stars, and they had pleasant lines for him now. As he saw his native land in the flush of victory, and the crown all but on his brow, with a wild impetuous thrill he repeated, half unconsciously, the prophecy of the Petoségan hado, made so long ago :

" The magic of the moon and stars
 Shall love to aid their earthly lord,
 And, joined with him in one accord
 Shall put to rout the wily Mars."

* * * * *

Then the next lines came back with special meaning, as he looked upon Lenore :

" The seasons roll,—o'er earth and sea
 The one thou lovest shall follow thee."

Here and now the faithful vessel was mooring at the curved shore of his native land, the golden sceptre held toward him, the beloved one docile at his side ; so what

surer evidence needed he of the kindness of fate and her guidance of his fortunes? The ordinary human vision of Elandos, dwarfed by prejudice, did not reach beyond the transitory marsh lights of hope. Blinded and satiated by the prodigal offering of self's every crown and gratified ambition, conscience and reason in despair forsook their wonted abode; while deluded self, deranged, false, and to itself untrue, commended all, and speeded on unheeding to the limitless Nemesis.

In the hour of highest glory and triumph, Elandos was transported and enraptured. As the many gifts of fortune came trooping around him he forgot the evil past, as it often is in life; when the Satanic human stands amid the effulgence of all triumphs, it for the moment thinks and believes itself seraphic. So Elandos, elated to intoxication by this multitude of successes, as the ship was made fast, threw his arms impulsively around Lenore, and kissed her, as his voice rang out in proud tones:

"Fair Lenore, crowns and diadems are thine, the stars guide our battle lines; yonder bugle note peals the mighty victories of Kormath, and I greet thee, fair Petoségan queen, empress, arbitress of the great Zoatia. Take possession of thy crown and clime, as did Althea, of the *Ægean* shore."

"Royal Elandos," replied Lenore, burning with indignation at this unwonted liberty, "thy action belies thy noble lineage, and thy royal nature taketh advantage of a helpless woman. Defenceless, powerless, she findeth no mercy in thy new-born glory."

"Sweet Lenore," interrupted the Zoatian, "forgive thou the ecstasy of victorious moments; thy will shall now be unto me a sacred mandate. Fair queen, to the landing and palace halls."

A messenger had been despatched for a carriage of the court, which was now at the wharf, and into it Elandos helped her gently, while mounted guards in yellow uniform, rich as October gold, followed on each side. Elandos was now the sovereign of the hour, while poor Lenore, with fluttering heart and anxious mind, both marvellously concealed, was waiting the unknown future. Once on the solid earth again, she hoped it would prove a real mother to her, and that, after some acquaintance with the city, she could make her escape.

The carriage was hurried to the royal palace, which had been but a few hours before vacated by the defeated king and all his retinue. Lenore was assisted up the great marble steps and escorted by a guard to a magnificent chamber, and here Elandos left her to a score of maids and waiting-women, with the courtly observance that he must immediately head the armies of his country. The servants were ordered to provide for all the wants and wishes of Lenore becoming the dignity and person of the queen of Zoatia. With this the Zoatian quickly descended the steps, mounted a fiery, dappled charger in waiting for him, and dashed away to the scene of battle, where the enemy had drawn up their lines for a last terrific struggle. Elandos did not save the day, for victory was already sure; but his figure with the flaming sash, which he now wore upon the outside, was soon recognized, as the foaming war-horse dashed amid the combating hosts. Peal on peal of joy went up from throat and bugle-horn amidst the rush of horses, the clashing of armor, and the tramp of men. The appearance of their king and general inspired all with a sudden, superhuman strength, while despair, keener than the thrust of lances, went through the hearts of the foe. The conquest was soon complete, and

thousands were made captives ; while the leaders suffered terrible deaths, according to the barbarous usage of the day. The usurper was captured, in crossing a small stream, by a mounted squad of the royal guard, and met an awful death at the command of Elandos, who, in the hour of earthly triumph, had not learned to be humane.

The Zoatian was sitting on the fiery steed amidst the wrecks of chariots, broken lances, groaning men, and dying elephants, receiving the homage of his subjects, when the captain of the guard came up with the unfortunate sovereign.

"Royal son of Belmeth," he addressed him, "behold the son of Zepthos, the conquered king."

Elandos turned toward him with a look fierce and shivering, and after a moment's silence, with a face without an emotion, gave the order :

"Cruel and lawless son of Zepthos, behold thy conquering foes, the Sage of the Crimson Sash, and death. At once thou shalt die. They shall behead thee, and with pincers pull the flesh from thy bones. Ye ministers of justice, let time not wait on your delinquency." Before the sun had reached the middle sky, the royal pretender had passed beyond the suffering that avenging man inflicts on man.

The grandees, the generals of the army, the high officers of state, gathered around the returning hero with grand enthusiasm and admiration ; and surrounded by the great military train, amidst the scarlet battle flags and the pealing horns, Elandos led the way of triumph to the royal palace, the Palangwa, the delighted spheres seemingly crowning their earthly lord, thus fulfilling the hado's prophecy, uttered in the distant past.

CHAPTER VII.

LOSMEGA AGAIN VENTURES ON THE DEEP—HITA'S ELUSIVE ANGELS—THE MIGHTY TEMPTINGS OF LENORE—THE OPAL WRECK BECOMES THE CRIMSON DIE.

As Losmega went back over the wrath-branded rock, his heart was rejoiced by the sight of a lone object on the barren sea. It proved to be a sloop, which he hailed by means of his tunic flung as a streamer in the wind. After a while he saw that his signal had been noticed, as the vessel began to tack toward the shore of the island. It was a fisherman's sloop, with but one fisherman in it. Losmega gladly welcomed this visitant from the land of the human, and, frail as the boat was to withstand the capricious ocean, it was more inviting than the desert shoals and volcanic drifts. The bark had been driven far out of its course by contrary winds. Losmega now got aboard, and the two hoped in time to reach some friendly land. It was now the second day of their sailing in quest of hospitable shores—still on the treacherous waters. Their voyage had been uneven, the sleeping winds sometimes leaving the sails clinging to the mast; but now the sloop was pitching wildly over the scalloped surface, away from the sun which was sinking in the west. The huge cylinders of billows rolled perpetually, and the blood-red rays of the sun, falling aslant, colored them into wonderful beauty.

Meanwhile Hita, with her faithful crew, sighted the

volcanic island, and reached it a day after Losmega had embarked on the fisherman's boat. How happy fortune doth sometimes slip from our grasp, like shadows from the toying fingers of credulous childhood ! How it doth sometimes mock us by its slow retreat, like the bewitching lingering of artful beauty ! What height of joy to both Losmega and Hita had they found each other there, even in that desert place, and left it together in search of Lenore and friendly lands ! Why was it not ? Why could they not have had a happy meeting on the sulphur-visited island ? Was it through some weakness of either, or both, or disobedience of some law of their nature ? Sure it is we have many wanderings in life made so by our erratic angels.

The Carmine Bud carefully inspected the island without finding a single trace of a human being amidst those blasted elements of nature, except the wrecked spar and a piece of canvas lying on the white beach a little distance above the line of the tides. Looking in vain for other evidences, and discovering no vessel, large or small, on the wild waste, she set out again to search, by chance or hazard, for the only two beings she held dear. She did not yet know whether Lenore had escaped the awful night of Petoséga's destruction, and she merely guessed that Losmega survived the terrible foe ; and, believing she had some trace of him, she bore on with stout heart and hopeful mind.

So Hita and Losmega, each unknown to the other, journeyed on to strange and perilous adventures ; while Lenore, though safe from the caprices of the perilous sea, was in the strong meshes of an artful and selfish man. From the instant Lenore was in possession in the regal palace she had surrounding her all the privileges

and honors of royalty, but guarded with the strictest care, according to the secret orders of Elandos to his all-confiding and obedient retinue, some of whom still lived, and had come about the palace on the expulsion of the usurper. As the enthusiastic hosts came victoriously from the fields of battle, bearing the hero-prince to the kingly mansion, the great train of royal attendants crowded the marble approach; and among her richly-robed guards Lenore came also to view the escorting thousands lauding the great high-priest and sovereign, hoping by some chance opportunity to find the means of escape during the distraction of the attendants with the multitudes; but her guards were vigilant, and no way of flight or evasion presented itself.

She saw the brilliant troops of gayly caparisoned chargers bearing the brave and mighty captains of war, and chief of all, Elandos, soldier, priest, king, the savior of her life, and her daring suitor. It was a scene fit to stir the lingering strains of the romantic in the soul of a defenceless, friendless, forlorn woman, from whom the sacred charms of earth had forever departed and the loved ones passed forever. Had she welcomed fate and sought the best contentment possible in her sorry lot, it would not have been to the dishonor of a faithful woman-soul; much less when we consider her helpless situation in the complete power of a mighty prince and priest, whose love, unreturned, unrequited, would be changed, soon or late, to deadliest hate and malice, and where love once sought to cherish and protect, hatred would seek to destroy and doom; where the penalty for resistance was foreshadowed in a lingering, torturing death. Aside, moreover, from this utter helplessness, there were the grand possibilities and opportunities of life held out to

her in this new situation. What woman has greater, richer blessings thrown about her—that, too, in the wake of a heartless past? A queen, sole arbitress of a kingdom, for the gift of her love; heir to thrones, honors of state, royal wealth, the climax of the luxury of earth, heir to love of an impetuous suitor, to a life that must have in it all the sweets and joys of existence, many or few, as they chanced to be. No woman could begin life with grander, more glorious prospects. What woman would not welcome it as the sunny side of life's dark, revolving globe? Here was a tremendous question, in the decision of which would hang the sorrows or the happiness of all time. Then who would hesitate to consider, at least, the golden apples that Fortune placed in the balance? In the midst of blooming youth and opening future no one will beckon pain, while joy and happiness are driven from the door. It is not unjust to say that very many women would not have rashly or inconsiderately turned away crowns and gowns of state, princely palaces, retinues in gold, treasures untold, and precious stones, and every blessing that imagination can accumulate together. This would be natural to life, to the human heart, that yearns after all the happy hours and sweet experiences it can attain to.

But the heroine of Petoséga stood before all this pomp and grandeur, for whom it all should be, for the utterance of one little word, the transporting, the magnetic, the angelic "yes" of woman, and gave it no thought; she was unmoved from the sacred principle of pledged devotion, from the upright, vertical line of love. Not for a hundred kingdoms, for diadems uncounted, for globes of gold, or the alchemic secret of unending life, would she draw the veil of oblivion over the sacred past, beat into

subserviency her love-conscience, and begin the kingdom of her heart anew. The spirit of change known to many mortals had no lodgement in her breast; the heart that would change through any vicissitude possible to life she would scorn; she would tear it from her; she would disown it. She would suffer anything, be broken on the Ixion wheel, or be tied to the vulture rock; but the sacred "yes"—the greatest gift that woman has to grant—given to the beloved one in the treasured past, would never again enchant the ears of lover, potentate, or immortal!

When Elandos was firmly settled in the kingdom, the formal enthronement over, the crown safely on his brow, he gave his entire attention to the winning of Lenore. He had been importunate all along, but now it was his irrevocable determination to possess her, heart and hand, at any hazard. A day or two afterward, in the late morning, Elandos sent a most gracious request to her to come to the room of state in the Palangwa. Beautiful, rich, grand beyond description, were the furnishings of this royal hall—a very rival of the marvellous apartments of the Alhambra. Her attendants escorted her to the great arched doorway, closing them behind her. She stood in the brilliant room, half bewildered by the gorgeousness, beauty, and color. But instantly her mute wonder ceased when the Zoatian, in royal robes, presented himself, bowing humbly before her.

"Fair Lenore," he began, "never before have I bowed the knee to mortal, fair or fiendish; but the majesty of thy being and the loveliness of thy face enthrall me, and I fall helplessly thy subject, thy adorer. I sacrifice my kingship, my ancestral royalty, my wealth; and my diadems I bestow on thee. These precious heritages, coming to me from ancient and primeval lineage, are

thine. My native country, the circling jewel of the great Moseitta, shall be thy fatherland. By its amber streams where in youth I played, together we in love may stroll and stray. Its oval hills, templed with the fir and juniper, where the nymphs of song wake their thrilling strains, oft shall bear thy tread in twilight's violet canopy, and with thee thy lover-king. Out of the rose and asphodel, out of the garland flowers I will pluck and weave thy snowy temple's chaplet, love's emblem and eternal seal. O fair Lenore, see how the gracious stars have crowned with every meed their earthly lord. Zoatia reaches forth her hands to greet my return, and lays her ancient coronet upon my brow. Thou art, O fair Lenore, my mistress and my queen. Be thou the sun to these smiling days, be thou the silver moon to my life's world! Be thou the Zoatian queen!"

"Wise Elandos," replied Lenore, "thou dost overwhelm my poor, weak woman's heart, but I beg thee seek not in me the object of thy passion. Yet think me not blind to the magnificence of thy self-denial, or the intensity of thy love's outpouring. But know, that which woman gives, I have given; and be that one, as I pray, still among the living, or in the troublous sea, this circling gold could sooner far change into the woody fibres of yon oaken staff than I would break my plight. Great priest, see thou my woman's soul!"

"Fair Lenore," continued the Zoatian, "all honor, all reverence to him who has been the heart of thy past. But together let us revere his memory. Thou mayst here in thy kingdom rear a monument so high, that it shall overlook the continents, and watch the playful morn through the fleecy roof run her threads of light. It shall be the great sentinel to the Palangwa, and under its

beneficent guardianship thou shalt live blessed in recollections and happy in thy life. O fair Lenore, be thou the Mosettan queen !”

“ Brave Elandos,” Lenore replied, “ by nature thou art kind and prodigal of thy gifts, but the faithful and changeless heart is the only monument to sacred memories ; yon towering column would be but the record of love’s infidelity. O great prince, I pray thee, wound me no more. I must not, I cannot, I will not hear.”

With these words Lenore turned in anguish toward the door. Elandos felt some strain of pity for her feelings, and only said :

“ Dear maiden, thy grief shall be respected. This afternoon, under the escort of the royal guard, thou shalt see the grandeur and beauty of the great Zoatia. The sublimity shall entrance thee, her soft and genial air woo thee, fair Lenore, and the foster-daughter shall learn to love and prize the love of the foster-mother.”

The kingly equipage was gorgeous and elaborate ; but all its silver platings and mountings of gold, its dazzling robes and trappings, its presence of majesty and power, all were dust and nothingness to the sweet purity and simple dignity of the fair woman, Lenore. It will not be necessary to describe the magnificence of nature seen in that half day’s excursion, and beautiful, indeed, it would have been to untroubled hearts ; but the soul is pierced just as easily by the silver arrow. The beauty everywhere displayed, the trellised thoroughfares, the wonderful picturesqueness of the mountain crests, changing chameleon-like in the metamorphic air—yea, the whole of Zoatia was one vast expanded Eden, realluring, reëncanting, as the unseen portions came to view. Among all the remarkable places the most marvellous in

beauty and grandeur was perhaps the "Driveway of the Immortals," as it was called. It consisted of a tremendous gorge or ravine, some eight miles in extent, where an ancient river had long ceased to flow, whose delightful grassy bed had been the pleasure-course of the Zoatians for ages. The gorge itself extended for an almost untold distance, but the beautiful, the grand part of it was eight miles long. Its form was angular, and the picturesque spots and caverns formed in this way were wonderful to behold; but the tremendous heights of the sides of the ravine, of the perpendicular rock walls running heavenward like vast palisades reared against the once warring waters; the enormous crystal blocks of granite, that here and there were seen set in the walls, with the marvellous figures written on their transparent surfaces, chained the eyes in amazement. The one the parchment especially describes was composed of a crystal cube clear as a French mirror, and a diameter longer than the dome of St. Peters, surrounded by the gray wall of rock. The whole had a brilliant transparency, but more wonderful than this were its markings. Far in through the translucent depths, yet perfectly discernible as through a veil of gauze, were two human forms, one the figure of a young woman, beautiful and noble in mien; the other a helmeted youth of graceful outlines, who was crowning his fair companion with a chaplet of gold entwined with the rose. Lovely were they, those lover forms of maiden and youth, and beautiful was the love there told. Perhaps this was to symbolize that of glass apparently is made the house that love lives in, and that hate is the inveterate foe of love. A striking illustration of this antagonism amazed the beholder. On the face of the crystal rock were the mighty blows left by gigantic

swords. There they were, one after another, yards in length on the clear granite. A strange sensation of power it made to imagine those giants as they stood in the unremembered past, with swords twenty yards long uplifted, striking with the fury of revenge across the transparent rock. There the tremendous blows remain, sixty feet in length; they measure five inches deep in the flinty stone. They are there forever, ineffaceable monuments of power.

The great scene at the end of the eight miles of marvellous nature consisted of sublime extinct falls, where the water had poured in its terrific course three thousand feet; and grand was the view from below up the great precipice of rock—a mile of granite wall shooting straight toward the zenith sky. Sublime, superb, amazing was this spectacle from the ancient river-bed, from the burial ground of the sea-horse and the mermaid, tiring the eye as it spanned the massive stretches of mineral battlements; yea, in this bed, where the living waters once ran rushing over the stone parapets, sowing the sides with torrents and the caverns with whirlpools in its undaunted course to the Mosetta. How frail was man standing in those depths, where the silent walls changed his very heart-beats into delicate echoes; standing where the deep, flowing Calanza had ceased its proud visits to the sea; standing on the crushed homes of the shell-fish, on powdered coral palaces now half covered by grassy oases; while he gazes up at the long-mute cataract now curtained by the silver mosses, and is convinced that the giant forces vanish and the streams themselves grow old!

There was enough in that pleasure-ride to capture, to enrapture, to enthrall one not in the throes of the feel-

ings; but Lenore's heart was too much borne down by sorrow's weight and the pain of anticipation to be absorbed in this scenic paradise. She was gracious and graceful to Elandos, and, being escorted back to the Palangwa, was alone with herself till the morrow. Once in her rooms, emotions strange and painful rent her soul. In the hands of a cruel potentate, numbering not a friend among all the human race, her heart's idol with the dead, her country destroyed by a remarkable occurrence of nature; what was left but to die or be a slave? It is said that when Vesuvius was near its most violent eruptions, it was most lurid around its summit; that the lightnings played with an awful glare; then came the cataclysm of fire. So now the forces were gathering, the white light of intensity began to play across the pathway of Lenore, fast deepening into the crimson. But she did not read aright her fate, and Elandos mistook her brightening heavens for his wonted starlight.

The middle of the next forenoon Lenore was asked to come again to the great room of state. The Zoatian welcomed her in most gracious humility. The flushed face and soft eyes showed that he was enamoured of the beautiful and good woman before him.

"O fair Lenore," he began, in an attitude of perfect adoration, "my heart dedicates itself anew thy slave. Noble one, why welcome the storm and shadow, and throw the veil of obstinacy and false self-denial against the sun and light? Let my eternal love create here thy kingdom of joy and long, happy years for thee. Sow not thy life with the brier and thorn, but with the rose and myrtle. I ask not to be thy past, but let me be thy guardian, the protector of thy future. Let thy thought

be no more gloomy, but light and buoyant as Zoatia's genial air, and thy voice as the song of her birds. Flee, O flee the darkened, yield to the sunny hour. Take, O take my heart, my hand, my crown!" With these words he fell still lower in his worship of her. Lenore could not help being moved, while pity and fear alike possessed her. She knew the crisis was nearing, yet her resolution was unchanged.

"Royal Elandos," she said with a face of sweetest firmness and innocence; "come happy life, come pale death; let the sufferings of ages be compassed in hours; let rage and hate pursue with sword and fire; let the heart's blood answer for the lips' firm words; in death as in life, unchanged shall be forever my sacred truth, for aye, for aye!"

She knew the effect of these words would be terrible to her, and her face took a startling pallor as she watched the actions of Elandos. He gazed at her silently and mutely, and the soft, shining light of those dark eyes changed to the cold, cruel look of the fiend. This silence seemed hours, ages, eternities, to Lenore, but after an instant he spoke:

"Petoségan woman," he said, the soft guise of character now thrown off, "countest thou my kingdom naught? Is Zoatia but drifting sand? Is my love but food for thy jest? Scornest thou thy lover, thy savior? Scornest thou the Crimson Sash?"

He stood now stretched to his full height, his right hand uplifted, touching the apex of the crown he wore, apparently watching for Lenore to recall or retract her decision; then with an oath he hurled the diadem from him across the regal chair into the farther corner of the chamber, while with rigid lips, and a voice

like muttering thunder, he uttered the fearful adjuration:

“Most fair and perverse, by yon precious heap of fragments, by yon rubies there in chaos, by yon opal fabric there destroyed, I swear that thy ungratefulness, thy cruelty, shalt cause thy cup of suffering to last thy term of years; the very air thou shalt breathe shall be crimsoned with agony and death; aye, and thy end shall be as shameful and complete as yonder sapphire wreck!”

The fiend of the Fiery Sash, finding his princely offerings and his love alike refused and of no avail, determined to lay aside all love, kindness, and gifts, and to inflict cruelty and suffering upon Lenore until she should yield and wed him; if in time he saw she would never consent, he resolved that she must finally undergo a death terrible enough to atone for her utter ignoring of his passion. He would win her now by cruel compulsion. He would now begin a series of acts to conquer her, each one increasing in violence, until the climax should come in a shocking death.

CHAPTER VIII.

NO-MAN'S LAND—THE GOAL OF IDIOCY.

LENORE went to her palace chamber with a full knowledge of the torture in store for her. The day of reckoning, long delayed, had now surely come. But come what might in the hereafter, life itself was all he could demand of her ; death would release her from cruel hands, while the presence of an unviolated conscience would be her everlasting reward. Narrower and narrower seemed to grow the opportunities of escape, dimmer and dimmer grew the hope of deliverance.

Zoatia was an immense and marvellous country, an island continent, surrounded by the great Mosetta ; and in addition to its splendor, its magnificent vales, rivers, plains, wonderful and strange tales were told by lost hunters and travellers of the vast and unexplored regions in the south-west part of the country. The stories were vague and disconnected, but they were full of startling occurrences, some claiming that weird and unearthly beings had their habitations in the tremendous volcanic regions. Now and then some one was found who declared that there were vast labyrinthine passages in the very bowels of the earth from which escape was impossible ; and it was further declared that under the strange, subtle influences of these places the reason of man was sure to be dethroned.

Two days had passed, during which Lenore was wholly

in the care of the royal attendants, not seeing or hearing from Elandos. The terrible imaginings that filled her mind grew into a death-like suspense. She naturally supposed the Zoatian to be engaged in preparing some horrible torture, but this was not the case. He was waiting in the hope that a little time for reflection and a day or two of suspense would cause her to change her mind; but when the hours rolled by with no word of compliance, Elandos prepared to put his diabolical plot into execution.

The horrible region of country lying far in the south-east of Zoatiashun, ned by mortal man as a very Erebus or Achero, was known as "No-Man's Land." It was as dead to human habitations as the moon. On the morning of the third day, Elandos sent a command to Lenore to be ready to leave the Palangwa in an hour, and this was all the idea she had of what was to take place. When that time arrived, Elandos, in the robes and sash he wore at Petoséga, presented himself at the door of her chamber, by the side of which stood twelve giant slaves, with two palanquins. Lenore responded unflinchingly to the call. There she stood, beautiful as Nydia, and motionless, awaiting the behest of the black-hearted sage of Belmeth.

"Petoségan woman," he said, with eyes that shot fire, "enter yon covered litter;" and she obeyed him with a stately step. The slaves bore the carriages from the halls, Elandos walking; but when he reached the great thoroughfare, he entered the other litter, and the two proceeded toward the scene of desolation and despair.

Nothing unusual occurred on the journey to "No-Man's Land." The provisions necessary for sustaining life, and the light covering necessary for the night, were

obtained as they entered the domain of the wilderness. It was not until they reached this point that Lenore had any idea of their destination.

"To the Goal of Idiocy, ye slaves!" commanded Elandos. There was something horrible in these words; but Lenore, who knew that supplication would be unavailing, and that nothing but absolute compliance with the will of this demon would change his purpose, uttered not a word. Neither did she make a moan or utter a word of complaint. At last, after some days, having crossed the great deserts and wildernesses which separate Zoatia proper from No-Man's Land, they arrived at the feet of the very wonders themselves. First were seen tremendous piles of sulphuric substances; rocks, black and blasted, rose to beetling and irregular heights, far higher than the eye could reach. The expression of these awful crags was hellish. By the side of these vast infernal palisades of burnt black and yellow rock, running down and down perpendicularly to measureless depths, were various lakes, or gulfs of black and heavy air, vibrating with a weird and awful vitality, and constantly undergoing terrible transformations, and at regular intervals gathering itself into great balls of blackness. The No-Man's Land was vast in extent, but on it the sun never shone. Hanging over the whole district, and high above the highest sulphur piles, was an ocean of strange blackness and awful density, like a pall to the dead world below. This never changed its limits or position, or its color. The outer rim was a regular circle without a break, and from the smooth edge the southern sun glanced as from steel armor.

The silent *cortège* halted at last, at the command of Elandos, at the distance of a mile from where the black mountains jutted up in the air under the horrid canopy.

"Petoségan woman," commanded the Zoatian, "arise, and see what earth contains!" Lenore did as she was told, and her lovely cheeks paled with wonder and fear. She followed Elandos in the direction of the black walls, while the slaves were left in charge of the palanquins, and ordered to remain there until their master should reappear. They were powerful specimens of the African race, and had evidently been many times in this service before; they were always left at this point, and never entered the mysterious district. Their speech had been rendered useless by a V-shaped piece cut from their tongues in infancy.

No mortal would of his own accord ever enter these weird confines. But Elandos was lord of the stars, the arbiter of the moon's lore, great magician of Belmeth, the mighty Sage of the Crimson Sash, who held all things in the hollow of his hand, and was exempt from the perils of earth or hell. He was king of evil, and, conscious of his power, he could tread the terrible labyrinth as safely as he could tread the gilded halls of the Palangwa. As the two proceeded in the path of death, conscious power and mastery were plainly visible in his mien. He was the ruler of two kingdoms, king of Zoatia, and prince of magic. After one or two exhibitions of his miraculous power the Zoatian felt sure of his victim. Any fate would be preferable to the horrible ordeals he had planned for the breaking of her obdurate heart and haughty spirit.

As he went on this mission of evil, wrapped in a vast human conceit because of his marvellous powers, he forgot the stain, which the very vitriol of repentance could not remove, made on his heart by Zellota's blood—a memory reaching across the numberless leagues of the

sea to the silent bride lying under the white burial slabs not erected by hands, in the lost Petoséga. What avenging spirit could arise from that vast depth of crystal plain? Would the tales of wrong ever go abroad into the world from the hushed form with the broken heart in the city of destruction? Can you pry up a mountain with a blade of grass? But hold! the Nemesis of truth and right works not with pick-axe and shovel, pursues not by removing objects from its way. No; it runs like the spirit of thought through the hearts of the planets and the unmeasured depths of the seas. Its shadow was already beginning to fall on the evil Elandos, deepening every instant into the awful catastrophe.

After a mile or so, the one eager, the other reluctant, and both as silent as the grave, they left the rays of the sun and entered under the dark wings of unnatural night. Soon they came to the uplifted walls of grim and sulphuric rock, and up the hazardous cliffs poor Lenore was compelled to go. She went ahead, Elandos following. Lenore was again commanded to descend a very precipitous path between two ranges of rock to a ravine going right back in the direction from which they had come, but on the other side of the first uplift of rock.

Down, down, three hundred feet, till they reached the level from which they started; and here, walled in on all sides by the mountains of granite, they entered a winding tunnel. This was the only entrance to the serpentine passage which led to the Goal of Idiocy. Elandos now led the way, but not a word was exchanged, the Zoatian's only object being to display his power. He had not spoken of love to Lenore since their last meeting in the Palangwa. Never again would he condescend to argue the matter with this headstrong, haughty creature. If

the anticipation of torture, or the torture itself, brought about a change of mind, it would be necessary for her to make it known of her own accord. But there was no change yet in Lenore, though her very heart seemed ice in the awful agony of her position. On and on they went, this strange couple, into this darkness. The windings were numerous and intricate, and out of them no human being could of himself escape. The usual depth of the passage admitted the bent form, but there were many places where it was necessary to crawl on hands and knees. At last, after what seemed to be miles of the horrid course, they neared their destination. The passage suddenly widened at right angles into an enormous space, while the floor was a platform of level rock. A few feet in front of them yawned an awful abyss. Lenore now faced a scene which seemed horrible enough to paralyze her sight. As they came out into the broad, open space, a pale, sallow light, the first that had been seen in that long journey, all at once slowly lighted up the atmosphere before them, and terrible was the spectacle. The air seemed an ocean of vast extent. As the illumination progressed, step by step the body of an enormous sphinx came into sight; then as the air cleared, a colossal skull, apparently a hundred yards across from bony wall to bony wall, forming a monster skeleton, a sight so transcendently awful that one could hardly hope to look upon it and live. Where the huge eyes of the monster once rolled and glared, were gigantic hollows that still glared and stared in this weird, yellow atmosphere, like the pale light of two dead moons.

Over this ghastly, ghostly realm and its awful mysteries Elandos, the Sage of the Crimson Sash, seemed to have absolute control.

As they stood there facing the monster, a few feet from the brink of the gulf, Elandos raised his right hand in a semicircle above his head. Instantly the whole situation changed, and poor Lenore, shrinking in horror at his side, was caught by a subtle current and driven into the lips of doom, down, down, farther than the eyes of Elandos could reach. After a few minutes her form came slowly up the steps of air into the mighty recesses of the skull arch, and sank again to those unseen depths. Day and night (and day was as night in that hideous region) this terrible machine of inanimate matter was kept in motion, and carried out its hellish purposes under the magic power of the Belmeth fiend.

Again the wizard smote his menial world, and another transformation occurred. The air was changed and became of a dismal sulphuric hue, and out of the awful depths arose a great white horse, the pale horse of death. Obedient to the wizard's gesture, the terrible creature drew near, and now the wretched Lenore was speeding along that strange highway which no mortal would ever dare to tread. What the power that placed her upon the back of this beast of death she knew not, nor how she preserved her senses in that awful ride ; but at last the air regained its sallow tinge, the pale horse slackened its speed, and once more Lenore found herself by the side of the arch fiend. Not a sound escaped her. She believed that she must soon die, and rejoiced in the thought. Her face was whiter than marble when Elandos, with one meaning and malignant glance, turned and left her.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CARMINE BUD CAPTURED BY THE CRUEL MONHEGANS—THE TERRIBLE ORDEAL OF THE GRAPEVINE OF FIRE.

THE human heart is capable of beautiful qualities, and Hita's devotion to friendship was as lovely as the faithfulness of Lenore. It will be remembered that the Carmine Bud set out in fresh disappointment from the volcanic island, with her steadfast crew of slaves, to search for Losmega. If among the ancients, friendship found its highest types among men in Damon and Pythias, so, among women, the glorious parallel should be put on record of Hita and Lenore. After many weary, disappointing days, a coast line came into view, and at length the shore was touched and the land surveyed. It was a barren beach, and no human habitation could be seen. This was the island continent of Zoatia, far around on the southern side, beyond the No-Man's Land, and its shores were washed by the great Mosezza; but Hita knew not where she was. While she stood upon the beach—which here declined gently to the sea—with the disconsolate and gloomy slaves around her wondering what to do to prevent starvation, a group of savages came into sight. They were clad in skins about the loins, and a tuft of the skin, tanned, with the hair on, was fastened upon each shoulder like a military epaulet. They carried long, slender lances and flint

knives. The most prominent feature of their weapons was the bow and arrow, the bow being low and painted black, the arrow dyed a vermillion red.

Hita's heart sank as she saw these frightful creatures approaching. What was in store for her now? In what way were these strange beings to change her destiny? She had but little time for thought. As the savages came within a few yards they separated, and, with hands on their bows, they began to mutter unintelligible words that seemed wild and brutal to the agonized Hita. A murderous fight seemed to be going on, and the Carmine Bud knew not which way to turn.

A few seconds later and the bows were drawn, and the arrows levelled at the slaves. Then these poor creatures attempted to defend themselves. Two of them started to run, but the keen arrows reached them in a twinkling, and they fell dead. Meanwhile the others had been speedily despatched, and Hita, too paralyzed with horror and terror to move, stood in the centre of the savage group like a beautiful white statue. At last, first one, and then another, of her companions drew near and examined her dress, looked at her hands, and peered into her eyes. Then, after a brief council together, the tallest of the group, who seemed to be the chief, beckoned her to follow them.

Famed through all the Zoatian continent was this cruel tribe among which Hita had fallen, called the Monhegans.

The twelve, including the chief who captured Hita, were the scouts of the tribe, who kept vigilant watch of the coast for unlucky wanderers and the victims of the ocean tempests. Wrecks and stranded vessels were often seized, and the living never saw their native land again.

Poor Hita, weak and despairing, followed her captors across a desert country, with here and there an oasis of grass and trees. At length they came out within a few yards from shore, having crossed, as it proved, a cape of considerable size. Now they were within a hundred feet of the beach, in a gorge of solid rock walls running to great heights. The ravine was either the bed of some ancient river now long dried up, or a great rend in the earth left by some terrible convulsion. Within these walls the Monhegans lived. Their houses were of a striking character. They were hewed out of the solid rock. On each side of the gorge for miles were granite dwellings of varying sizes and forms, making a remarkable stone village, which was not without beauty. The workmanship showed considerable skill with chisel and hammer. On the whole the houses were small, with now and then one of larger proportions. Ten feet square was the usual size, with one small window. A rude art was also visible in these dwellings. The women—strange, silent creatures—drew the water from the wells, hewed in the stony bed, and baked their fish over a fire made of a peaty substance resembling coal; while the men seized the wrecked vessels, and plundered and killed the crews.

That night poor Hita passed in one of those stone dwellings, on a bed of skins. The Monhegan women searched her carefully, hoping to find something valuable, but were unrewarded. Her fare was baked fish and maize bread. At last the morning came and the rude meal was over, while up and down the winding gorge rang the loud, hoarse cry of a huge sea-shell, blown lustily by one of the savages. For fifteen minutes this barbaric reveille was kept up. It was the summons to

the great council of all the tribe to consider the case of the captive stranger.

The tribe gathered in a semicircle before the house of the chief. This functionary sat upon a huge block of stone in front of his house, with Hita at his right hand. His address to the tribe seemed a powerful effort. The language was indescribably awful, with its fierce gutturals, interspersed with wild gesticulations, and frequent pointings of the finger to the pale, trembling prisoner. After the chief had finished, brief but excited remarks were made by prominent members of the tribe. Finally a decision seemed to be reached, and the audience dispersed.

Immediately after the noon hour, six Monhegan women came to the dwelling to which Hita had been conducted, and led her through a long, winding path up the side of the gorge to a level surface in the wood, where were assembled hundreds of the tribe waiting for the torture and death of the white stranger, as delighted as the cultivated Romans were in the sufferings of the dying gladiators. All around were the sombre, sallow faces, eagerly watching the approach of the young girl. At a short distance to the right was a terrible blaze made of pitchy wood that crackled and burned as if furious for its victim. In the midst of a great circle of Monhegans, a place some thirty feet square was left unoccupied. On two sides of it were two trees of large size, from which was tied a huge grapevine some ten feet from the ground. More curious still was its character. With the exception of four feet at each end, around the grapevine were tied, a few inches apart, tufts of hemp thoroughly saturated with pitch. The ends of the grapevine ran through holes bored in the trees, thus permitting it to

swing the full circle freely, while around the trees were small platforms built in a rude way, on which those who operated the grapevine could stand. On it, as Hita approached, four men stood, testing its strength and position. Was all her love and fidelity to have an end in barbaric cruelty? the poor victim asked herself. But the Carmine Bud had once prayed upon the Blessed Isles.

After some talking between the chief and the tribe, all was apparently ready. The master of ceremonies stepped close to Hita, and communicated by signs and gestures her coming doom. With a quick intuition she read every motion, every change of feature. The impression she received was imperfect, but she felt sure that if she accomplished a certain feat, her life would be spared. At a sign from the chief the hemp on the grapevine was lighted, and the great circles of fire swung high in the air. She knew now that she must literally jump this rope of flames a certain number of times to save her life, but how many she could not determine from the blind language of the chief. And further—horrible thought!—she knew that the terrible task would be to jump the fire-rope so skilfully that neither herself nor her clothes should be scorched. She dimly understood that there were to be three trials. She was entirely at the mercy of the barbaric Monhegans. If she failed she would end her life on yonder flaming pile of pitchy wood. Great was the task, great the reward, horrible the doom. But the suppleness and agility Hita had acquired in the palestras of her beloved but buried Petoséga could not fail to be of some help in this awful hour. Once again she thought of the Blessed Isles, and then calmly faced the inquisition.

Without a look at her captors, without a word or a

tremor, the Carmine Bud drew her tunic about her and commenced the ordeal. A grunt of admiration rose from the assemblage as this fight with fire began.

The chief sat down, and the men again started the lurid instrument of torture on its awful revolutions. The first trial was successful. Then the chief motioned her to stand back, and pointed to a pile of skins, where she was expected to rest herself for the next crucial trial of her nervous and physical strength.

The second ordeal was more difficult than the first, for the vine was shortened and the flying curves made very elliptic, so that the burning hemp was only a short distance above her head. Again and again she jumped the blazing circle, every instant in peril of casting the die against her life.

The experience she had gained partly offset the increased difficulty of the undertaking. The duration of the trial seemed longer this time, and when the respite came Hita was unable to stand. Again she lay down to rest, amid the exciting shouts and speeches of the agitated Monhegans.

After a half hour had passed the brave girl was summoned to final trial. The circle was now so elliptic that the body must be bent to escape the flaming vine, requiring all the greater quickness and agility to trip the lower course. Poor Hita! Would it be possible to accomplish this task? Could she save her life? Her adroitness, her strength was failing; the slightest misstep, and all would be lost. Would her endurance last until the barbarous and cruel demands of the Monhegans were satisfied? But she was battling for her life with the wild and frantic efforts of despair, and so she nerved herself anew for the crucial test.

But now her strength was visibly failing her. Her lithe and well-practised limbs were slower in responding to her will. Every moment she was in greater danger of becoming entangled in the swinging flame. Poor Hita was already half unconscious, her breathing was difficult, and every respiration apparently was the last. All she saw above her head was a curved streak of light. Her easy tripping must soon become a heavy stumbling. Again the electric curve was sweeping the air. Could she pass it? No; she felt her swooning senses. Let death come. She could do no more. Glorious moment! She saw the staying hand of the chief, and, taking a step backward, fell triumphantly in a fainting fit. She heard but faintly the plaudits of that barbarous assembly. The Monhegan women carefully placed her on the skins, and to revive her used a fluid extract of herbs.

BOOK THE FIFTH.

CHAPTER I.

LENORE IN THE UNIVERSE OF DEATH.

MEANWHILE Lenore was suffering the tortures of a wizard world, a victim to her heart's fidelity. The Fiery Sash had departed, leaving his magic spell upon the dread place, and Lenore in the awful thralldom of these torturing phantoms. All that night without cessation she was the helpless captive of those spectral terrors. If she had not been more than ordinarily constituted she could not have endured an hour of this worse than supernatural torture.

On the following day, near the approach of noon, the Zoatian threaded the windings of that section of hell uplifted, and stood on the rock rostrum for a moment, watching the helpless creature of his hate, once his love, emerging from the weird recesses on the great white, nether steed. Soon he gave his right hand a peculiar movement above his head, and instantly the snow-colored horse vanished, a gloomy duskness filled the skull world, and Lenore came straight to Elandos by some magic, attractive force, strong as that which draws the planets into the dark womb of the sun, and stood beside him. The Zoatian brought some food for her, and after watch-

ing her for a few moments, asked her if she would now change her mind.

"Fair Lenore," said the wizard, "I entreat thee, I beseech thee to be henceforth and forever the mistress of my heart and Zoatia's queen. Thou shalt be my soul's idol and the angelic guardian of my life. Steel not my lips longer against affection, but make thyself the living spring. Recall, O recall thy spoken words!"

"Elandos," replied Lenore, "in thy cruelty there are many forms, to thy inhumanity there are no limits; but in my love there is no change. When the amethyst yields its violet, the ruby its crimson, the emerald its green, then shall my love be like the opal."

The Zoatian, again rejected and rebuked by this unequalled womanly firmness, continued for a time to plead for a return of his love, but Lenore answered not another word. His vindictiveness now rose to unparalleled heights, and his anger blazed out from that feigned love.

"Petoségan woman," said Elandos at last, "thy precious stones may their lustre keep, and thy love be as unchanged as they. So shall this heart of hate change only in its dire invention. On to thy self-created doom!"

Poor Lenore was to suffer still the terrors of the wizard fiend. This renewed wrath paled her beautiful features, and she quivered in the terrible vision of the future. Yet there was no desire to save her life in the way demanded, much less to buy palaces and crowns with her love. Fidelity needs no long hours to reach decision. Lenore could meet now even more than the phantom, death.

Through the windings of that Stygian darkness the Zoatian led her to a yet more infernal place, calculated to blight the senses, to trick the reason, of any human

being doomed to tarry there. Now she was to suffer in the Universe of Death.

After they had reached the place where they entered the Goal of Idiocy, they began another hazardous ascent, and then, as before, passed down into the lava bed and reached again the serpentine passage, which seemed the entrance to hell itself. The windings were a thousand times more intricate and labyrinthine than before, crossing, interlacing, and looping upon one another until no human being, unaided by the powers of magic, could thread them to the light of day.

At last they reached the end, which was in a perpendicular wall of rock. Right before them was the opening to the Universe of Death. Suddenly a lurid or purplish light burst on the surroundings, disclosing a great circular door made of a human face, whose grinning features confronted the startled gaze of poor Lenore. It seemed to her to have almost a living presence, that might, perchance, spring and blight the bold intruder for his blasphemy. The face looked point blank and vertically down through the centre ; in the vast jaws of the human there was a metal fastening which, by a sign from the fiend, loosened, and the hemispheric door, made of mortal substance, swung either way, presenting a still more astounding interior.

In the power of the terrible Zoatian, Lenore could do nothing but cross the threshold and let the horrible door close behind her.

What horrors were presented here ! Enough to rid the eyes of sight, stop the course of blood, and destroy the functions of the senses. They stood in a room or hall, large enough to give the feeling of a chilling vastness, whose only light was the dusky air mingled with

the purplish glimmer. This awful chamber was built literally of human bones, the mortal remains of men, women, and children, made into walls and ceilings, into floors and partitions, and into uncanny pieces of furniture. The very floor they were standing on was paved with upturned faces, brainless globes set close together. Here was the giant face; here the fiendish; there the once womanly; here the frail childish. All around on the walls were human skeletons, perfect in anatomy, arranged in phalanxes like the Plutonian hosts. On all that array of fleshless countenances there was the individual expression of agony, doom, and misery. The bewildered mind could almost hear the hollow tread of that soulless host. In all that chamber there was no sound, nothing but that mocking and consuming light.

In this awful hour, was there a single thought in Lenore's heart of change? So blasting, so freighted with destruction was this hell-chamber, that even the obligations of love could scarcely fail to be as nothing to the saving of self and respite from this agony. In her delirium of terror, in her wild and half-crazed mind, poor Lenore, for an instant, and only for an instant, was half inclined to cling to the Zoatian's tunic and beg for mercy. But this was of but a second's duration, and then her womanly firmness returned.

"Rash fool," said Elandos at last, "find here thy kingdom, and thy school in which to learn to determine the vassal from the sovereign."

The strange doors opened silently outward again; the Zoatian passed through the dark entrance; the human skeleton closed its barricaded jaws, and this woman, of the undefiled and undeviating soul, stood alone, in that dungeon of the sepulchreless dead.

CHAPTER II.

HITA'S DESPAIR—HER NIGHTLY VISITOR.

HITA, by her courage and skill, had now become a veritable goddess to the savages. They considered the white creature a far higher being than themselves, and they honored nobility and virtue, when these qualities had been proved according to their tests. They would gladly have made her queen over their wild homes, but she had won her liberty by the terrible fiery gauntlet, and, though savages, they would not prove untrue to honor, and deprive her of the boon. Through their awkward symbols, they conveyed their willingness to assist her in her plans or designs.

The soft and sable mantle of the night wrapped her exhausted form in long hours of slumber, and she knew naught of earth. The angels of a better day came down the stairways of the unseen world, and for the moment made her sleeping vision take on the powers of the immortal, and gave to her human eyes the all-seeing faculty of the divine; while before her mind the actual world passed, leaving a vivid and hopeful recollection.

An angel came into the granite dwelling, and drew with his seraphic hand the panorama of the wanderings of Lenore and Losmega, vaguely showing their present place, and the fate of both. The terrible web that Lenore was in was made plain, and for an instant a ball of fire came some distance up the horizon and disappeared,

showing that greater evil was in store for her. A ball of black cloud hung directly over Losmega's head, and Hita knew he was in present distress, but just what or how serious, the vision did not show. The winding of Losmega's course led to the near vicinity where she then was, in the Zoatian continent, but suddenly stopped in piles of barren wreck. The great Zoatian capital was before her; she heard the roll of the rude drums and the shrill call of the bugle. Then she saw a great hovering canopy of blackness, and underneath it tremendous uprisings of torn and blasted rock. Before her were the awful labyrinthian passages, and Hita felt herself actually threading them, and arriving a little later in the presence of Lenore. This great happiness awakened her, and then the vision faded.

CHAPTER III.

HITA AGAIN SEARCHES FOR HER FRIENDS—SHE FINDS LOSMEGA.

LOSMEGA, after he left the volcanic island, passed through many vicissitudes. The poor fisherman was taken with a violent sickness the third day out, and died, leaving Losmega again alone on the sea. On the fifth day he hailed a ship, was picked up, and all went well until, rounding the boisterous cape of the land of the Monhegans, on the south-east coast of Zoatia, Losmega's vessel was stranded in a high sea, in a fathom of water, at midnight. The Monhegans discovered it in early morning, and half the party went to capture the white stranger, while the other half bore the booty to their rock city. Losmega and some others took to the drifting masts ; but as it was simply a matter of endurance, he was the only one in that dark wilderness of water that reached the shore, quite a distance from the land of the Monhegans, farther to the south-east, on a terribly wild and precipitous beach that was scarcely accessible even by the skilled cliff or mountain climber. Here he lived on roots and herbs, regaining his lost strength, and watching for some vessel that would take him to a more hospitable shore. This part of the coast was never frequented by the Monhegans. It was very difficult to reach over the walls of rock, and it was outside of what they had always regarded as the boundaries of their

country. The rough seas and tempests, also, were always on the cape where they lay in wait for their prey, though the place where Losmega landed was sheltered and tranquil.

In all of his former experiences Losmega had escaped serious bodily mishaps, but in this last his fate was not so kind. Just as the ship was tossing in the angry sea and each man attempting to save his life, a sudden blast twisted off a spar, which, in falling, struck Losmega a severe blow upon the shoulders, laming him greatly.

Partly by a vague direction and partly by instinct, Hita had followed more closely than she knew the vessel of Losmega. She had been sure that somewhere in this region of the southern Zoatian shore she would find him a wanderer or a captive. Her vision now made it a certainty.

The morning after that strange and prophetic dream was a beautiful one, as if it might have been the lingering brilliance of that angelic herald. The rude breakfast over, she indicated by signs, which she could use now quite skilfully, what her purpose was. The savages seemed to perfectly comprehend her desire, and to be willing to assist her, and the second day after the terrible ordeal she started out with the Monhegans, divided into several parties, to search the interior and the coast. The first day there was no success, nor the slightest clew to the existence of a civilized man in the country.

It was in the middle of the afternoon of the fourth day, when poor Hita, despite faith, despite prophecy, felt the return of deep despair, and she sank down on a large stone boulder, whose edge on the south side was concealed in deep earth, forming a roof-like decline, a relic, perhaps, of some glacier which, in the pre-human era,

changed the climate of the rocks and swept away the mountains like hillocks. Her elbow on her knee, her face on her hands, loneliness and hopelessness swept her heart-strings with sad and pathetic strains.

"Oh, why should mortals suffer? O thou cruel sea, in thy secret depths thou dost possess the strong, noble friend of my youth. His frail bark thou hast lashed with thy raging waves, and his unspeaking form thou concealest forever from my eyes. O unkind ocean! why pursue his innocent craft by thy terrible tempest, and overwhelm it in thy angry waters? Methinks I see him clinging to the fragments of his ship, and his upturned face smote to death by thy maddened billows, while thou gavest him not one league of placid sea. O love! O friendship! born to be cut asunder by the cruel vicissitudes of life——"

From this sad reverie she was aroused by the faint tones of a barbarous voice that came to her on the wind. She quickly arose and listened. It must be some token or tidings. Again she heard it in the direction of the precipitous strip of coast, and this time it sounded nearer. Before she had fairly collected her thoughts a fleet-footed Monhegan came through the thick jungle a few yards in front, like an animated arrow, and stood before her, his dark, muscular limbs quivering like those of a spirited and excited horse.

The savage was certainly the bearer of great tidings, and by his expressive gestures and the few words which she had learned of this strange, barbarous language, she recognized the fact that a stranger had been discovered.

Joy and sadness alike filled the heart of the Carmine Bud as she followed the flying herald.

It was an exceedingly perilous course that she had to

traverse, an abruptly zigzagged path down the cliffs to the beach. She was not unused to such dangerous undertakings, and at length reached the white, sanded shore in safety. Finally they came to a high ridge of rock, running at right angles to the sea, like a mighty palisade to the level plain. In this beetling rock there was a cavern of some size, globe-like in form, and the inside had a smoky look, as if there Vulcan might have had his forge. In front, like sturdy sentinels, stood two Monhegans. With quick eyes Hita saw the prostrate form of her friend Losmega. For a moment, this man who had suffered so much, and despaired so often, believed the beautiful Carmine Bud to be an apparition from the salt sea grave. Here he was a thousand miles from the buried Petoséga, and here was Hita. Incredible, impossible, he told himself.

But soon his eyes saw aright, and when the beautiful girl flung her arms around him in the purity and sacredness of her affection, his joy was boundless and inexpressible.

"O dearest Hita," he said at last, "tell me what all-seeing Providence preserved thy life against such odds and sent thy footsteps here. O Hita, Lenore ! Lenore ! That beloved form will never greet these eyes again. That awful sea must hold her in its bosom. O the sorrows of life ! Why have I not died ? Why do I linger in this cruel world ? O Hita, if I could hope that my love is living !"

"O Losmega, be not so hopeless ; I believe that our dearest Lenore is living and on this very continent, but far to the northward. In time thou shalt have her again. How canst thou be hopeless after this meeting ?"

"O dearest Hita, why thinkest thou so ? What

tidings hast thou for so wonderful an expectation? O Hiita, kindle again in this heart the flame of hope. Hast thou seen her? What mortal brought thee token?"

"Noble Losmega, listen, and thou shalt hear all the strange story; afterward thou shalt not be faithless."

The Carmine Bud then related the whole of her wild sea experience, and every event up to that very hour, dwelling especially upon the clear but mysterious vision that had guided her to him.

A rude litter was then constructed, and Losmega was borne carefully through a long and roundabout way to the dwellings of the Monhegans. He was so weak, and so much injured by his accident, that he was able to walk but a short distance.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RED ROSE'S MISSION TO LENORE—SAVES HER LIFE BY
A MAGIC PHILTER—HITA JUST ESCAPES THE FIEND
OF THE BURNING SASH.

THE next morning Hita began at once her preparations to follow the rest of the clew given her by the vision. The Carmine Bud made everything ready before acquainting Losmega with her intentions. The first thing she did was to visit the chief, and state by signs and the few words she had learned of their language, the journey and its object. She desired six Monhegans to accompany her with provisions and other necessities of the expedition. This request was readily granted, and the chief himself selected the strongest and most reliable men in his tribe. From a medicine woman and hado she obtained a reviving philter, which she hid in her bosom. One of the Monhegans acted as a guide, and, indeed, the whole tribe was well aware of the location and the horrid fame of No-Man's Land. After everything was in readiness for the journey, Hita told Losmega of her purpose.

"Dearest Losmega, in a few moments, with the Monhegans as guides, I shall set out to search for our beloved Lenore. I cannot wait one day longer, one hour more. It will be some days before I return, and thou must rest in patience and in hope that by that time thou mayest be fully recovered. Be cheerful, that thou mayest be the

sooner restored ; and give thyself no apprehension for my safety, for the love of Etis is my shield."

"O dearest Hita," replied Losmega, "it will be a wild and hazardous journey for thee, a lone maiden in a strange and uninhabited country ; but if thou knowest the way of the gods, follow the light through the riven vale. It is unbroken darkness to me."

"Dearest Losmega, I must search for Lenore. I could not disregard the revealed plan of the gods, and the sacred instinct of my own soul. Let thy hope be full as yonder moon at eve, and it will bring back thy Selene. May the gods bless thee, and the love of Etis restore thee. Dearest Losmega, adieu."

And now the Carmine Bud departed, in the face of mighty perils to her own life, on her great mission. Her guides could direct her with entire certainty to the very confines of the No-Man's Land ; but no mortal, civilized or barbarian, had ever dared to step under that canopy of quivering blackness. All along the way Hita found many objects and peculiarities which she recognized as the same which her vision had disclosed. This wonderful similarity from time to time reassured her. At last the tremendous expanse of cone-shaped cloud came into view. Hita shrank back when she saw the awfulness of that unearthly spot.

She left the Monhegans in charge, just outside of the black circle, they indicating by signs that they would remain until she returned, and would assist her, even to death, in battle ; but would not trust themselves with the devilish beings that, tradition said, haunted No-Man's Land.

So the Carmine Bud parted with her barbarian friends, knowing that they would be true, and entered under the

darkness. Her human eyes stood her in good stead, but the vision constituted her supreme direction. Several times she was in doubt, and had to think which way she should go to find the Universe of Death. The vision had shown her that she must be as fleet as a shadow not to fall into the power of the terrible Elandos. On this mission she could not rescue Lenore; she could save, she could convey intelligence, but she was not to bring her out from that dread chamber.

She scaled the mighty beetling crags in the pathway where the Zoatian led Lenore to the Goal of Idiocy, but when she came down to the rock level where the entrance was, and another ascending pathway, she hesitated which way to go. After an instant's thought she took the perilous course around the neighboring peak, descending in the bed of the lava stream to the stone floor, and entered the black opening to the right. Now came the most difficult part of the journey, for to lose her way would be to wander to her death. So, though she almost flew on her supernatural errand, she made careful observations of every step of the way.

Hita had gone so swiftly that the long distance seemed short, and she came very suddenly to the end of the labyrinth. Here the monstrous doors confronted her. She gazed with awe and consternation at the awful face, but only for an instant, she had no time for fright: her mission was life or death. Like a flash the thought came to her of the duellin, a trinket like two parallel gold bars an inch apart, attached to a silver cross-piece, which the angel reminded her to wear on this journey. This she immediately took from her hair and inserted in the two small apertures of the metal fastening, and the doors opened as if touched by magic. Hita cautiously passed

the threshold of that awful place, into the destroying damp and consuming air, into the death-bringing chamber.

The next instant, and she was rewarded by the sight of Lenore. The victim of this infernal cruelty reclined, half unconscious, in a chair made of a skeleton, her strength almost gone. She was in a stupor, but after a moment or two her friend's caresses brought her to her senses.

"O Lenore, Lenore, my darling sister, I have come, I have come to save thee! Lenore, Lenore, dost thou know Hita, the long-lost Hita? The gods have sent her to thee."

"Art thou really Hita of the ruined Petoséga?" said Lenore. "Is this some vision this dread place creates? O no, thou art my own blessed Hita! But I am dying, Hita, dying—the Zoatian—O knowest thou of Losmega? I have kept my love for him, but not my life."

"O sweet Lenore, thou shalt not die. I have come to save thee, but I must fly. Soon thou wilt be rescued. Losmega lives. I have seen him. This and this, and thrice these he sends thee. But drink quickly this philter and thou shalt escape the Fiery Fiend. I know your captivity. Ask me not why I go. Thou shalt soon know all. The arms of Etis stretch over thee. Cherished sister, fare thee well. Beloved Lenore, keep thy faith, love, hope, and fare thee well."

"O blessed Hita, may the gods preserve thee. For Losmega and thee I will hope and live. Blessed one, farewell."

The Carmine Bud went through the grinning jaws out into the dark windings. She had passed several of the intricate loopings, when her delicate ear detected, some distance away, the approach of a human being. She

stepped lightly aside and nestled in a nook of the concave wall. The steps came nearer and passed by, and on. It was the Zoatian on his way to Lenore. Aye, she knew that form, that presence, even in the blackness, and it brought back all the thrilling events preceding the destruction of her native city. Aye, what death lurked there, had she confronted this powerful potentate and magician. Her keen perception read the distances without error, and when there was no sound she hastened like the wind from those inscrutable involutions, reached the opening, and hurried to the waiting Monhegans to take departure for the granite city. She felt the most terrible pangs of soul to think she had left her dearest friend in that place of death, in the power of that fiend. But so it must be for a time, until the destiny of things could be revealed.

It took almost more than human patience in Lenore to continue to live in this universe of death, after the visit of Hita. The magic philter saved her life, for the love potion gave her hope and stopped her declining strength, so that she gained in power of body and mind. But the swinging of the monstrous doors and the appearance of the Zoatian broke her meditation on the strangeness of human things and this glorious new-born hope.

CHAPTER V.

THE LAST SWORN WRATH OF ELANDOS—THE AWFUL RESOLVE—LENORE MUST DIE BY THE LUGAN.

THE great stars did not tell the magician of Belmeth all their lore. His narrow, finite, conceited vision was the measure to all they contained. He was no more their pupil; he was the proud master that scorned almost the source of his knowledge. He now came for the last time to demand of Lenore her decision. Never more should he sue for love. If she refused, then should she die.

He approached the skeleton chair where she now reclined, calm and tranquil, under the influence of the strange draught. He thought, as he saw her in this subdued and weakened condition, that his good fortune had come at last. "Beautiful Lenore," he said, making a half humble obeisance, "the bridal veil awaits thee, and the diamond chaplet by the golden throne of the Palangwa, amid Zoatia's power and glory and azure skies. Surely thou wilt be my queen here by the fair Mosetta seas. The fates make thee mine own; they have willed it, the stars declare it: then why fight against that which is to be? Refuse no more, fair destiny. I offer my heart, my hand anew. My fairest, my most beautiful Lenore!"

Elandos took a step closer, and attempted to caress her. All the woman in her rose at this new indignity.

"Thou wretch of royalty," she said, with calm deliberation, "neither thy power, nor thy magic, nor thy cruelty, nor thy professed love, can ever make these lips speak as thou desirest. Sooner ask these skeleton forms to rise up into being. If thou couldst lengthen each beating of my heart into an eternity, and I be doomed to suffer through all the boundless ages, I would still refuse to accept deliverance, and what thou falsely callest love, from thy hands. If thou couldst change each particle of the Mosettan sands into sapphire; if there were ten thousand earths, and the myriad races were thy slaves to work out by invention thy machinery of revenge; if the countless stars shone on thee their menial light; if the trackless spheres were but infernal worlds, and thou couldst daily bid them troop their shapes to blast this sense and sight; aye, if my life were made as long as time, and each moment had in it a cruel death—the multitude of this could not persuade me to give thee my love. I have spoken."

The die was cast. The terrible fury of the Zoatian broke forth in awful violence.

With a terrific burst of rage, and gesticulations as wild as those of a madman, he addressed her:

"Petoségan woman, thou shalt die! No, not die; thou shalt be destroyed; thou shalt be reduced to nothingness; thou shalt be annihilated. Thou shalt suffer agonies a million times more fearful than the wizard art can produce. These terrors here are not the shadows of the doom that awaits thee. They will teach thee a heartlessness thy most monstrous dreams conceived not of. Better if thou hadst thy tomb in the deep sea; better had thy craft found the ocean's bed. Love, continents, and rubied crowns I threw at thy feet, and

thrice thou countest them as nothing. Come, then, ye ministers of destruction, and blow ye through the infernal worlds for the dire engines of expiation. Agony shall cause thee to change, and change unceasing. Time itself shall end ere thou breathe out thy last. By all the gods, I swear ; by the shrines of Belmeth and her mighty powers ; by my sacred art ; by the prophecy, the stars, and the pale moon's lore ; by earth and heaven, I swear I will be avenged ! The generations shall come and go, the eternities pass around their orbits, but still thy expiation shall go on. In the Lugan is thy doom ! ”

CHAPTER VI.

SHE IS LEFT IN THE DEN OF APPARITIONS, WHILE
ELANDOS HASTENS TO THE JOSDON.

THE Fiery Fiend had had implicit faith in his stars and his art, and had been sure that Lenore would finally yield. Never for a moment had he doubted the prophecy of the Petoségan hado, and his own interpretation of the heavens. Now he was filled with doubt and astonishment, and his faith gave way to the most violent rage and hatred.

"Heartless Petoségan," he said, as he swung back the awful doors, "pass from this place. A more fearful than this shall know thee henceforth."

Lenore followed him through the sepulchral windings, to be again a terrible sufferer in another infernal chamber. The Zoatian conducted her through a long serpentine tunnel as gloomy and intricate as before. After what seemed an unending time they came to the phantom hall, the Den of Apparitions. A wall of rock closed the passage. Then, by the means of a small instrument, the magician opened another den of rock, which was quickly closed and fastened again, and Lenore was alone in a world that seemed made up of the living-dead. There was no light in the maddening place except that which came from the grinning, leering, threatening countenances that came one after another and peered into her eyes. Cold hands swept her face, scraps of horrible sen-

tences were whispered or screamed into her ears, and from this most crucial torture there was not a moment's respite. Here they were, these demons from lowest hell, above her, in front of her, behind and beside her.

Every instant she was surrounded by a brood of evil spirits that fluttered their horrid wings in her very ears and their phantom features in her very face. She thought her senses would be crazed. She put her hands to her ears ; she closed her eyes ; she fought the air to keep them off. Yet desperation seemed only to create a thousand more. She could only keep her reason by fighting with her arms and hands the inhabited air, but this would soon exhaust her.

The chamber seemed to have no bounds except the thick and impenetrable blackness, and wherever she turned the trooping brood pursued her, to lead captive her reason, and change her soul into a shape like unto theirs. Was this the terrible doom the Fiery Sash foretold ? Was this the eternal and never-ending expiation ? Was this the dreadful annihilation of the human his last sworn wrath declared ?

One by one these thoughts passed through her half-crazed mind as she struggled with these furies for her life.

Horrible and deadly as was the Den of Apparitions, it was not death by the Lugan. As light is unto darkness, so was this unto the Lugan. The Zoatian, determined to use his infernal power to the utmost, hastened to the Josdon to make inquiries about the Lugan, intending, when he returned, to ask Lenore even once more to be his bride, before the final atonement.

Far to the east, in a straight line on the continent of Zoatia, in the midst of a mighty range of mountains

known as the Penthones, in a beautiful valley, there had existed from time immemorial a giant race, famed as descended from the gods, called the Josdon. These people held no communication with other races of the earth. Whether this was because they held themselves aloof from the rest of mankind, or because other people had a certain fear and dread of them, cannot be told. It might have been due to the remoteness of their situation. The stories about them were extremely vague. No one was found who had visited them or had personal knowledge of their character. But there was a certain lore, that the wise possessed. The Josdon were supposed to be the wisest of mankind. The order of their mind was said to be omniscient.

In their moral impulses and codes of right they were said to be aided and enlightened directly by the immortals, because of their noble aspirations. The pursuit of good was their highest existence. This, by generations of strict observance, became a habit, a moral function, as much as it was the function of their eyes to see. Hence their hatred of evil. It could not exist among them, that is, concrete, absolute, and monstrous evil. Annihilation of evil was the result. Out of this virtue had grown the relentless expiation of the Josdon.

Vague rumors of the moral code of this people, and their relentless punishment, existed far and wide among all nations, but had never been corroborated. It was to obtain exact knowledge of this death by the Lugan, to learn of the machinery and the process, that the Zoatian prince, the fiend of the Fiery Sash, hastened to the Josdon, leaving Lenore safe behind the locked door of the Den of Apparitions. When he should return with this perfect knowledge, then she must meet her final

doom. He did not take her with him, since she was safer there, and was suffering with the possibility of relenting. Then, too, opportune help might rescue her in the civilized country lying between "No-Man's Land" and the Josdon.

CHAPTER VII.

SECOND DREAM OF THE CARMINE BUD—HITA PLACES LOSMEGA IN SAFETY—HASTENS TO THE REALM OF APPARITIONS.

HITA returned to the granite city, in the litter of the Monhegans, in joyful spirits. She had found Lenore and Losmega after her long and wearying search. She looked back with thankfulness to her prayer of faith on the Blessed Isles. How lovingly the gracious Ata, and Hiva, and Rita had heard her plaint and answered her supplications. There were in it all the rough lines of adversity, to be sure, but these only deepened the beauty and preciousness of the boon. She was happy, thrice happy, to feel that she was the agency under her divinities of accomplishing the glorious achievement of bringing her friends together in blissful reunion. The heart-ache, the physical suffering, the mental pain, were as nothing now in this great day of her reward. Yea, fate might make them a thousand times more intense, but her heart's rapture would not be dimmed, such was her sublimity of soul.

The joy of Losmega, as may be supposed, was beyond the power of imagination to describe, when the Carmine Bud carried to him the tidings that she had seen Lenore. She told him as much of her situation and condition as her womanly prudence dictated.

"O Losmega," she said, "Ata, the queen of love,

reigns and rules. The lost Lenore is found, and lives, and to thee she sends her sacred love."

"O Hita, Hita," replied Losmega, "dost thou speak truly? With thine own eyes hast thou seen her?"

"Aye, dear Losmega, her self-same face and form, thine own Lenore."

"Oh, how and where is she? Thou hast not brought her? Aye, in captivity of the fiend of the Crimson Sash? O tell me, is it not so?"

"Aye, in the Zoatian's power; but time speeds, and his web is broken. Keep thy faith and patience, and the gods will help us."

"What horrible fate deals out that existence to her? May the blessed gods wreck my vengeance on his soul! How can all this be? How dream-like thy expedition seems. Thou really didst see her?"

"Dearest Losmega, the vision was true. By its tracings I went straight to Lenore. She is in the power of the Zoatian, who attempts, by mighty endeavors, to make her his queen, but she will not yield. But, dear Losmega, the night must give us sleep, and to-morrow we will plan the future. Hast thou recovered thy strength?"

"Aye, dear Hita, and good and true have been the Monhegans."

The Carmine Bud fell to sleep that night under the great responsibility, which was now tenfold greater, as the living Lenore, and not the imaginary one, was to be rescued from the wrath of the Crimson Sash. On her heart, too, rested all the sufferings that Lenore was undergoing.

The gracious divinities of Hita again came to the brave girl's assistance, and lighted up the pathway of her future. A messenger from the sublime goddesses seemed

to hover about her pillow of skins, in the middle night, and sketch for her the way of release. Soft and low was the voice which spoke in the accents of the immortals.

"Fair emblem of purity and love, he whom thou fearest has suddenly departed to an unvisited clime on a mission of evil. Haste thy footsteps to the eastern side; wear the duellin, repeat thy devious ways, and rescue her whom thou lovest. Where the sun begins his summer course, there, to a three-templed city on an amber stream, take thy beloved ones. The destroyer has the wings of time. Haste, and may the beloved Etis guide thy errand of love."

Hita awoke as the departing angel was on the threshold of her house of dreams, and she knew instantly the significance of the supernatural message. At the dawn she hastened to tell Losmega of her second vision, and her plan of leaving at once the granite city. She secured from the chief of the Monhegans medicine men and litters, with other necessary things for the long distance. Her purpose was to place Losmega, who was still weak, in safety in the city designated in the vision, then rescue Lenore, and bring about a blissful meeting, out of all danger, and in a civilized country.

Finally everything was in readiness. Her savage friends disliked to part with her forever, but she bade them a grateful farewell and began the journey. The distance was long, but the men were strong and muscular, and they carried the litters with great ease and rapidity.

The vision proved accurate in every particular. She saw the amber river and the massive temples long before the city was reached. She went at once to the priestess of the patron divinities upon arriving, and the assistance and friendliness she needed were immediately accorded

her. The greatest kindness and hospitality were shown to both. Losmega was much fatigued by the exposures and hardships he had undergone, and his malady considerably increased, much to the alarm of the poor, careworn Hita. He was placed in the charge of the best physicians of the city, and then, with the Monhegans and several of her newly found friends, she hastened to the Realm of Apparitions.

CHAPTER VIII.

RESCUES LENORE, AND SETS OUT FOR DIVA, ON THE UBELTO.

THE Carmine Bud went with impetuous haste on her sacred mission to the "No-Man's Land." While the destroyer was weaving his web, the deliverer stole his victim. Her dark sky was now fast clearing ; the vision was directing her again surely to the promised goal. This time she had no fear of the Crimson Sash, for he was far away on his awful embassy of evil. She knew that Lenore was in very torment, and momentarily in danger of yielding up her life to the phantom horde. She had enough knowledge given her of the frightful character of the Den of Apparitions to fully realize its horror, and to feel that a few moments' delay might change the balance from life to death of her only friend among all womankind. So much was there at stake, so terrible the responsibility, that Hita grew unnerved and almost frantic. Her feet seemed held by leaden weights, and her spirit went so far in advance of the body, that for a while her poor weak flesh and blood seemed impotent in the face of so mighty an errand.

She reached once more the mysterious world of darkness in the "No-Man's Land," and took the lead, while part of the Monhegans and Divans went with her, and part remained at the entrance. This was a sort of delta of ways, but at last she found the direction which the vision

had indicated. The threading of the windings was less dreadful than before, but when she came to the right-angled rock wall in which was the door to the horrible place the vision informed her of, she felt her heart sink within her. For, in spite of all, poor Lenore might have succumbed to the evil spirits. What mortal could be strong and brave enough to bear these tortures and live?

But with the strength of despair, and quick as thought, she opened the rock door with the duellin, and found herself in the midst of phantoms. There stood Lenore, beating back the horrid crew that now seemed on the verge of victory. She seemed to be fighting with her spirit hands, and her power seemed to be a spirit power. It was as if mortal strength had long ago failed, and that, by some change unknown to human knowledge, she was there, though in bodily form, and all unconscious, battling like an automaton with her infernal adversaries.

Thus it was that Hita came to her the second time. For an instant one glance she gave her. Was she dead? Then she rushed to her, grasped her lifeless form, and drew her like a flash from that Den of Apparitions, through the rock door into the tunnel chamber. There she fell on her knees, pressed her lips to the white cheeks, and put her hand over the still heart. From her girdle she quickly drew the replenished phial, and between the pale lips poured the contents. Was it life? or was it death? What moments of agony for the noble Hita! Had the life-blood all ebbed away from that cherished form? Was not the last crimson of suffering on her cold brow? What a picture of awful suspense and pain it was in that horrid tunnel of blackness, with the noble Hita on her knees, the still figure of Lenore lying aslant them, her head resting on the curve of her arm, and the silent look

of the divine Hita peering wistfully into the life-depths of those closed eyes !

With what ecstatic joy she saw the signs of returning life who can describe ? She beckoned to the huddling group of Monhegans, who were a little distance away. They quickly brought the litter, and Lenore was placed upon it. They wrapped her in goat skins and moved cautiously from those hellish abodes. Animation returned slowly, but Hita was sure that time would bring back full consciousness and life to Lenore.

What key is there to this marvellous psychic mystery ? Here was one from whom the spirit seemed to have departed ; here was a woman whom the soul had ceased to animate, whom the mind had ceased to control, whom the reason had ceased to guide ; yet her physical being in the energy of full life had beaten away her spectral assailants, her bodily power running on with no diminution of forces, as she fought the devouring phantoms, while her intellect was unconscious of the mighty efforts the machinery of the body was making.

When once outside the walls of darkness, Hita hastened to the three-templed city, called at that time Diva, on the river Ubelto. Hita kept the strictest watch over the slowly reviving Lenore. The open air, the philter, the knowledge of safety, were bringing her back to life. But she remained in unconsciousness so long that the Carmine Bud began to feel fresh alarm. It was not until half of the journey was completed that the awakening came. The palanquin was stopped, and Hita hung over her loved friend to give her the first greeting back to life. Finally Lenore opened her eyes with a startled look, and gazed about her.

" Beloved Lenore, thou art in the hands of thy friends,

forever freed from that awful thralldom. Soon thou shalt be safe in a civilized city, and in the arms of thy beloved Losmega. He would have come with me had he not been worn out by his terrible sufferings. But he is gaining health each day, and will soon be strong again. The evil spirits thou shalt see no more."

Lenore still looked about on each side of the litter with a frightened expression, and asked :

"O Hita, Hita, dost thou know where the Zoatian is? Dost thou know he will never come again to doom and enslave me?"

"Have no fear, dearest one ; the fiend of the Crimson Sash shall never have power over thee again. The gods have told me this. So be not anxious, but regain thy strength in peace."

"O dearest Hita, goest thou directly to Losmega? and do the gods favor his recovery? Tell me true."

"Aye, dear Lenore, we go where he is. Be thankful, for the fates say he shall recover. Close thy eyes now in rest and sleep, and the journey will not be long."

"But how is all this, dear Hita? How didst thou know of the Realm of Apparitions, of my incarceration there, and how hast thou rescued me? How strange a Providence!"

"The blessed goddesses have presided over our destinies, and said that we should meet again. All the mysteries thou shalt know in good time."

Lenore fell asleep as the sturdy and faithful savages bore her carefully and rapidly toward the city. In a short time they would reach the Diva and the Ubelto.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DREAM OF THE JOSDON HADO—THE TERRIBLE WEB OF ELANDOS DRAWS AROUND THE FIEND OF THE FIERY SASH.

ELANDOS departed for the Josdon and their great city of On, determined to find the most cruel expiation for Lenore known to earth or hell. The slaves he had in waiting he took with him. At first they were ignorant of his destination, and when they discovered that he was bound to this wonderful and mysterious people, their dread was so great that two of the slaves contrived to elude even the vigilance of the Crimson Sash, and so escaped, making haste to reach the Zoatian capital.

The interpretation of the wills of the immortals, the exposition of the laws of heaven, the agency of communication with the unseen, were, among the Josdon, vested in a great priestess who was known as saga or hado, with much more than the ordinary significance attached to the name. She was represented as absolutely pure in person, and sublime in thought and action. She could draw the future about her like the written past, while it was yet unborn time to the rest of mankind. Her soul seemed to explore the things to be, forerunning the revolutions of the suns and the march of the hours. In the great matters of eternity, the moral questions of life, the determining of right and wrong, of good and evil, she was the absolute judge. She, however, claimed no infalli-

bility of wisdom ; she was simply the vicegerent of the immortals on the earth. She only interpreted their will, and made it known to mortals. This superior knowledge was vouchsafed to her in the form of the vision. The future came to her in the shape of a world, blank and white as snow, on which were mapped and written in vivid colors the past and the future.

The second night of the departure of Elandos for the city of On, the Josdon hado was burdened with a remarkable dream. It related solely to the life, crime, and evil nature of the Zoatian. His early life was first displayed, then his manhood, his wanderings, and the incipient degeneracy of his character. Finally the great capital of the Petoségans, nestling like a bride of the sea, in the moon-curved bay of Selenella, was thrown on the wool-white globe of her dream. Then she saw that throng ascending the great marble terraces, the Petoségan lovers and the innocent, confiding Zellota. All the dark ways and actions of the Zoatian's dark heart were pictured in minute detail.

The climax to this history occupied a great belt, a vast crimson meridian. It was the Petoségan mansion, with its inner curtained doors uplifted on that murdered form, while the tell-tale kalos of gold and opal lay unscreened to the eyes of right. Now came the city's woeful oblivion, and the mighty strife on the wild sea. Then there was a girdle of blackness, black as blackness ten thousand times congealed, representing the condition of the soul that imposed such awful cruelty and terrible thralldom, the perfidy of that being fast hastening to the Josdon. She saw his journey to the On and the fiendish intent of him now wholly wicked. Such was the dream of the Josdon hado.

How strange a thing human nature is ! Here was this evil man, this Elandos, pursuing a pure, saintly woman with all the vengeance of his invention ; as if he were the good and she the evil—pursuing as if from a powerful conscientiousness and with the solemnity of justice. The fates of eternal retribution could not have been more immovable, implacable, than this villain-fiend for the annihilation of the woman he had professed to love. Here the heart, the reason, the soul lay in absolute abeyance to the savageness of his revenge. On the fourth day the Fiery Sash made his appearance among the Josdon in the great city of On, and sought at once the abode of the hado. It was a stone palace, built temple-like, in the side of a gigantic, precipitous spur of the encircling Penthones. Here the great priestess dwelt, and here also was the entrance to a mighty subterranean world where the fates turned their nemesis wheels.

The Zoatian represented his mission to the hado in a plausible and reasonable manner. But how transparent was all this invention, this enormous deceit, to her whose vision time or place limited not ! Had his own soul been filled with the tranquillity of purity, he might have read his own stars better and warded off the coming fate. How the hado must have mused inwardly at this attempt to roll up the scroll of his life there before her. If he could have read her mind, how he would have shrunk at the revelation ! What a picture of deformed soul, degenerate intellect, as he stood before that intellectual light from the eternal spheres !

"Great priestess," he said, as he was ushered into those halls which were less for human habitation than for the oracles of destiny ; "I have journeyed hither to obtain wisdom of thee, for I have heard that thou pos-

sessest more than ordinary knowledge. I render myself thy servant for the favor of thy graciousness, if thou wilt bow to thine inferior."

"Royal stranger," said the hado, as she listened with intuitive insight and read his soul, "what wilt thou? I will hear thy desires."

Elandos, with pride and haughtiness tingeing his speech, stated his purpose in coming to On.

"Wise priestess, from the throne of my ancestors I have hurled a daring usurper, and have but shortly assumed the sapphire crown of the ancient Zoatian kings. Mighty was the conflict, for the new line of sovereignty was well established in the kingdom. Though the leader is dead, there are many conspirators, many whose secret power is great, who must be destroyed for the safety of my throne. There are also many traitors awaiting the penalty of the king. It is to find requisite punishment for the criminals of the state that I seek thee. For I have heard that there is among you a method of retribution severe enough for the highest crimes, which is unknown to other nations. If thou canst grant me knowledge of thy usage, thou wilt bless thy servant and a royal house."

"To thee this wisdom shall be given, and thou shalt learn of the ancient and mysterious custom of the Jordon and witness the doom of the Lugan, if thou mayest comply with one condition. Art thou of disposition to hear?"

"Aye, wise priestess; let my ears hear thy demand."

"Thou must first pass into the chamber where the Wheels of the Universe, in their immortal processes, revolve the acts of time and decree the final judgments. Wilt thou go?"

"I have lived but to discover the grains of wisdom. I will follow thee."

"Then prepare thy eyes for the mighty task before thee. Nerve thy senses for the strange revelation of the invisible. Thou wilt need all thy strength. Knowledge shall come upon thee from worlds unknown, and thy mind must needs face the revealed glimpses of the infinite. The intelligence of the spaces shall unfold to thee the processes of its wisdom.

"Thy human vision has been accustomed to the obscure things of life, to the dark things of earth. Thou hast been used to the limitations of time; thou shalt go where time is consumed in the cycles of the Here-after. Here thou hast been used to life mingled with its dead machinery, but now thou shalt stand in the realm of pure existence. Here thou hast understood only the little circles of being, but thou shalt go where the meridians sweep the systems. Earth produces only error, and thy moral vision has witnessed it until it is perverted; now thou shalt go where the light radiates the spheres. All thy span of life, thy human eyes have been thrust against the black walls of evil that run the circuits of human years; but thou shalt learn how the needle rays of light that pierce them go unheeded by mortals. Thou hast been used to the little measuring yard-stick of time, but thou shalt behold the mensuration of the eternities; thou hast witnessed the slow, creeping calculations of man, but now thou shalt see the eternal surveying chains reeled from the axis of the omniscient. Thou hast seen how human invention frames the pretext to deceive, but thou shalt see the mist of deception flashed into nothingness before the suns of Truth. Thou dost know that the immortals have decreed life

into portions : youth, manhood, age ; and from one to the other mortal passes, and behind him falls the veil of oblivion ; but thou shalt see them reappear beyond the circling earth, each in its order as it was lived, on the dial-plate of eternity, revolving and revolving in the awful blaze of justice before the Essence of Existence that examines the deeds of life. Put away thy frailty and draw on thy might, that thou mayest see, unshaken, the awakening past rising up before thee in living forms. Wrap thy strength about thee and follow into the spaces. Then thou shalt be fitted to experience the Lugan."

The language of the priestess deepened and deepened in significance until Elandos shook and trembled inwardly, and his face was slightly paled by the mysteries concealed in these utterances. It was the evil in his nature that made him fearful of the coming revelation. Had it not been for this, he could have witnessed whatever the fates had to reveal. His marvellous self-control born of his wizard life rendered him almost like a statue in his feelings, and to a casual observer he was unmoved ; but to the eyes of the priestess his every emotion was visible. He could not hesitate now to face the future ; so in a slowly growing terror he made ready for the journey.

"Tarry but an instant," she said, "and thou shalt go hence." Soon the hado appeared in a trailing gown, apparently made of creamy wool, as white as a fleece of the newly fallen snow. This set off her dark features, raven hair, and eyes in a striking manner. Her form was tall, graceful, majestic, and decisive in carriage.

"Let us proceed to the chamber of the Wheels of the Universe," she said beckoning to him, and they started through the rear of this temple-built palace.

They had gone perhaps a hundred feet over the stone

floor when they came to three mighty columns of rock, standing a few feet apart, in the form of a triangle, or like a gigantic tripod of Neptune, hidden there, the fossil sceptre of the sea king. Through the central entrance the priestess led him into a tunnel-like pathway, that ran zagged right and left through the rock. This was a devious and terrible course, for it was in utter darkness, and the walls projected in a thousand inconceivable forms. Here the sides ran out into long, sharp saws or barbs, and there harsh cones looked as if they had been torn off by convulsions. Overhead were cruel, hanging fingers, like needles of ice frozen into stone. Underneath the feet were deep holes like vast mortars, where, perhaps, the giants ground with their pestles.

"This is to symbolize that mortals enter from darkness into light," said the hado, "and thus we have no lamp."

At length the end was reached, and they came to a circular hole some four feet in diameter, in which was a curious stairway, or what was meant for an entrance to the recesses below, made of projections or knots of rock. Down this they passed for some fifteen feet and entered a cavern-like passage, still in the brooding darkness. This was very long, but finally the sides drew together in another stairway slanting downward in a kind of shelving. This was very winding and intricate, without a sound, a glimmering, or a whispering. Down and down into the womb of the earth they went, straight on, without a turn to the right or the left. This finally ended in another singular tunnel, which consisted of looped windings running parallel, so that one almost doubled upon himself in threading them; it was like passing around great partitions of rock set there in the tunnel.

A startling scene fell on the gaze as the last loop was threaded : they stood in a large oblong chamber of wool-white rock, a great parallelogram of space, sided by immense blocks of pure snow surface, while overhead the great plain was like a vast extent of summer cloud. The floor appeared to be of solid rock, but it was not to be seen, for a sparkling star-dust was strewn over the surface, as if it had been showered by the wreck of worlds. A thrilling sight it was as these two mortals walked on that diamond carpeting that was made not for the trifling view of the human. Here were the lamps to the feet of man : how all this came to pass, the frail intellect could not understand. And the singular inscriptions on those whited walls astonished the beholder yet more. Running in parallel directions were blood-red lines of characters unintelligible to human sense, in-seamed in the flinty substance as if burned there by the vengeance of fire, and they could have been written only by the very quills of the lightning. There Elandos stood in stupefied amazement. How it withered the proud Zoatian, as he was held face to face with the actual handiwork of the invisible !

"This," the priestess explained to him, "is the vestibule of the chamber of the Wheels of the Universe. Thou seest yonder where the fingers of the Spirit of Being have written in the flame of their power. They are but the whisperings of the mighty beyond. They are but the fire track of the Soul of Life, where the living flame is wrought into scrolls. They are but the symbols of the mighty, searching power of Truth, that runs with its burning might through the lives of men. Let us hence now, where the Essence of Existence sits in judgment before the illumination of the concentrated worlds.

The star-points thou treadest on, this jewelled dust, so unutterably marvellous to the eyes of men, this crushed texture wrought from the globes, is but desert sand to the Soul of Life that sweeps the glory of creations together to illumine its holy of holies. Never before hast thou come so close to the very beating bosom of the Universe, where each act of every living thing is with justice measured in the eternal balances. The great lights of creation have, in thy sordid, human life, stood afar off like the dead moon; but here thou dost draw nigh to the very face of Truth. Let us hence ! ”

And what strange sublimity that chamber presented ! Those pure white walls, as if carved out of solid light, and those vermilion lines—Truth’s mighty tracings. How beyond all conception was that splendor which was like a zone of the heavens laid down as a carpet, whose bright points, each a world, sent lines of light to the white walls in terrible grandeur. Here time and distance were annihilated, and Elandos could read the stars like an open book. Right in their vault he stood, with the radiance withering his sight. What would their pale lore tell him ? Had he made them a guide or a delusion ? Had he dreamed that his mortal eyes would peer into their very faces ? But here he was before them, and the yet inexplicable mysteries were crowding on his whirling brain.

Such was the strange and transcending brilliancy of the place ; such the awful refraction of the celestial rays—but, oh, the air, the atmosphere, surpasses all attempts at description ! Here it came unpolluted from the fount of its being in its native virtue, ere it had passed through the continents of a thousand globes, circulated round and round the worlds for countless time, and been

reduced to the thin and barren air that the human knows. Here it was in its origin, in the mad intensity of exhilaration, a pure celestial ether, making a very elysium of the senses.

All the while they journeyed on in these transcendent courts of the sublime on the buoyant waves of this elixir, in this most splendid illumination, while there was not a sound or a voice to disturb this unutterable serenity of silence. At last they came to the end of this grand transept, to looped windings again which this time consisted of pure, white rock. This continued for some distance, when very suddenly, more suddenly than lips can utter it, or the lightning carry it, they stood in the awful presence of the Seat of Being and the Wheels of the Universe. Elandos was stricken into dumbness and palsied into speechlessness by the increased brilliance and the tremendous thunder volumes. It was a mighty burst of sound, startling, dazing, thrilling. There must have been some subtle medium existing in and filling up those white wall partitions, through which not a tremor of noise could penetrate. The terrible suddenness of this change fairly turned his living form into stone.

The power of description of this scene lies not in tongue or pen, or in the cunning of the fancy to weave it into language. But hither the priestess had led Elandos, and great was to be the revelation. Yet how shall the awfulness, the majesty, the glory of it be told? Well, first the immensity bewildered the intellect. On every side there seemed no limits to this celestial space, as it swept far out of bounds no man knew whither; and there were no rock sides anywhere, but limitless distances of the Essence of Life. Star-dust, as before, made the wondrous carpeting, only more beautiful and

splendid, from the crush of richer worlds. Throughout those vast arches, as if all the vaults of heaven were wrought into this one dome, there was the grandest gold canopy, far beyond the human conception of gold, brilliant; and sweeping through all those vast circles was this glorious glow falling in folds of lustrous gorgeousness down the horizon sides. Most delightful and intoxicating was the subtle fluid of the wondrous vestibule, but this was a thousand times transcended by the divine elixir that filled this Fountain of the Seat of Being, as it penetrated the very soul, electrifying every sense into a divine elasticity, transporting and expanding and bringing back the human spirit to the empyrean of its origin! Such was its rapture, such its ecstasy, that it wished to float out upon it, free from its tenement of matter; yet only for a minute, moment, instant, could the human bear the delicious but fatal allurements.

And, oh, the thunderous sound of that place! enough to destroy the webbed mechanism of the ears, and the reverberations thereof were as though mountains had been lifted up miles into the heavens and let fall crashing upon the earth in awful and destructive grandeur, or like worlds unorb'd and dropped from space upon stone plains. On the volumes came, roaring, crashing, crushing, as if the elements were breaking up; as if an ocean had been suddenly let loose and rolled over a mighty forest. And there was a mighty beating, beating, in the recesses of this wonderful sphere, a great distance afar, swelling, swelling, until it was very nigh in its terrifying, vast pulsations, like an enormous heart, the gigantic heart of the universe. All this wonderful, strange artillery thundered and rolled around that spherical horizon, now dimming into the far-away rumbles,

then nearing in the terrific peals and burstings, enough to rend to atoms the very globes ; and in it all there was a mighty dread as if freighted with the awful warning of doom, from which no mortal could escape, chained there by the subtle nature of the place.

But all these mighty thunder volumes came not from the Wheels of the Universe, or the Fountain of the Seat of Being ; they were outside and around them, the awful herald echoes of the judgments of doom.

The bewildered Zoatian followed the hado across the star floor, and stood before the Wheels of the Universe, as if the spheres were concentrated there to awe him who should behold. Ranging along on the right, reaching to an undiscoverable distance into the gold halo, and extending upward a thousand feet, it seemed into the wondrous canopy, was a vast rolling cylinder of flame composed of three enormous wheels that slowly revolved on an axis of fire. And what was more extraordinary, each flame was of a different color of most startling brilliancy, one being of red, another of yellow, while the third was white.

Right in front of these wheels, but some yards away, were great pure white globes, three hundred feet through, revolving slowly and horizontally round a vertical axis of fire ; and what material they consisted of no man knoweth. They were called the Globes of Life. The career of every human being was expanded into this mighty spherical form, and the reason whereof will soon be seen. And these worlds of life were innumerable, one slowly following another, rolling toward the mighty color-wheels, and disappearing in the gold firmament. Thus they came and went unceasing. To the left there was a giant goddess, most seraphic in blessed-

ness, of grandest serenity, and her speech was immortal intuition. Her throne was of sapphire, and in her right hand she held a wand of gold. As the hado came before the goddess she fell down on that carpet of wrecked worlds in utter awe, and the high-priest of Belmeth followed and did likewise. There was the look of sublimity and awful knowledge on the features of the goddess, but she did not speak—and she never spoke—for she was the goddess of Fate.

From the enormous wheels of fire there were reeled off constantly vast bands of flame, a thousand feet deep where they left the wheels, declining to three hundred feet, the exact diameter of the globes; and there they were, too, in awful contrast: the one reeling off the most brilliant vermilion, beyond the human sense of red; the second a mighty chain of dazzling, blinding yellow, and the third a rolling belt of magnificent sheet-silver. There they circled and blazed and flamed upon the slowly revolving Globes of Life. Terrible was the dread presence of the place, for those vast flame-tongues shot with overpowering velocity, pouring and deluging those life worlds, which passed into the strange eclipses of the flames, fairly shivering the soul with the terrible mystery they there enacted. The illumination thereof was as if all the fire and flame and light of every world had been gathered together and wrought into a thousand intensities, the slightest ray of which would seemingly cauterize the mortal sight. Yet there was no heat in all that strange chamber; simply the outpouring and the essence, refined, of life.

All this time, while the eyes were palsied into nothingness by this flame-essence, the ears were torn and rent by the awful thunder volumes on every side, now swelling

into the very bursts of annihilation, then distancing like destroyed fury, then changing like the chase of oceans across the vaults of heaven, the crush of mountains from starry leagues, or the terrific telescoping of planets through congregated worlds ! What lore do the stars tell Elandos ?

Few were the words said in that dread place ; but the hado rose to her feet at last, and with her the Zoatian, and she spoke a word of awful interpretation.

"Stranger prince," she said, in awed measurement of sentence, "this is the chamber of the Fountain of the Seat of Being, and yonder are the Wheels of the Universe, and yonder the Globes of Life, and yonder the mute Goddess of Fate. The red sheet of flame has in it the essence of existence forever ; the yellow sheet of flame, eternal and never-ending death. Each human life is symbolized and expanded into those vast, fleece-white, revolving globes, as thou seest. The interpretation of the globes and the flames drenching them with the awful light is like unto this : Every life lived upon the earth is some time or other summoned up in this globe form, and its absolute good or evil put to the test of fire, and—hearken well—this it is : Thine, perchance, is called up from the invisible and set to revolving slowly toward the great Wheels of the Universe, and for a short space standeth still in the eclipse of one or the other sheets of flame ; and the deeds of thy life will suddenly appear gathered together as a scroll on the bosom of the wool-white globe, and wrought into an awful brilliance by the mighty belt. And hearken !—if it standeth still in the red flame, the deeds are good, and the Goddess of Fate decrees to it life forever ; if it standeth still in the yellow flame, the deeds of that life are evil, and the goddess

decrees never-ending death ; but if it standeth still in the white flame, then the destiny of that life cometh not in this world, but waiteth in the eternities. These Wheels of the Universe but fix the retributions to be fulfilled on the earth, and in every earth in the vast circuits of the spaces a like Fountain of the Seat of Being existeth, to judge there the same.

“ But watch, now, and sec thy life’s globe appear.” With this the hado ceased and turned with a silent look to the mute goddess, who instantly raised in awful majesty the wand of gold vertically before her, when suddenly the white globe of Elandos’s life revolved into view, figured over with the career of evil, and it stood there in the terrible eclipse of the yellow flame ; while amidst the thunder echoing of this doom round about, the Zoatian sank down on that star-floor and swooned away !

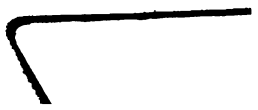
CHAPTER X.

EARTH'S ELYSIUM—MEETING OF LENORE AND LOSMEGA.

Two days from the time Hita, with Lenore, left forever those mighty acerval heights, which were like a half earth zigzagged into piles, and that awful wizard thralldom, they reached the Diva, on the Ubelto. During this time Lenore had gained much. The terrible strain had ceased, the handling of the palanquin was most careful, and the joyous anticipation of meeting Losmega made her once more strong and cheerful.

Was there not a heaven in store for her? What is there of ecstasy or of rapture in all of the experiences of this world that is not found in the blissful meeting of lovers? What is there that takes captive so thoroughly as love? What sensation known to the human heart that so charms and enthralls? What other emotion lifts so high in the serenity of bliss or casts so low in the depths of despair? What woos the sore heart to life again like love, or maketh the vision iris-eyed?

What is it that suffereth a thousand deaths, yet clingeth to love, making desert life to bloom into the red rose of hope? that maketh captivity and bondage and servitude joyous with expectancy? What other sentiment would not quail and surrender itself before the white horse of death, before the consuming presence of that skull world, or that chamber carpentered out of human bones, with its floor of upturned faces and the cry of the dead human?



What heart would not fail before the creeping, subtle essence pouring through the vitals of the living, or before the staring and beaming of that skeleton host, or that ring of spirits bewitching the soul into delirium, or that air-plane of phantoms breathing forth mortal vapor, and the beating and the fighting, while the soul has gone from consciousness and the body gone from reason, like the grand and still momentum of a wheel that has lost its belting?

What horrors, terrors, hell-worlds she endured, and did not quail. What strain of heart and mind, awaiting the terrible, terrorizing death by the Lugan; yet, in this last agony, she would not swerve from her sacred past. This is the blessedness of devotion, where life, nor death, nor terror, nor suffering, nor earth, nor infernal world can change it in aught.

Then, consider her vast sacrifice. There, thrown at her feet, was the beauteous sapphire crown of the ancient kings of Zoatia. A kingdom was hers, with millions of brilliant people her loving and worshipful subjects, with pearl-curved Mosettan strands, great plains, and stately flowing rivers; with palaces and temples, thrones and diadems, the heraldry of state and war, the magnificence of retinues and the blazonry of courts—all this multitude of earth's possessions for the simple granting of her love. Aye, her devotion was true gold, through all this heaven and through all that hell.

What is so powerful, so sublime as love? What transcendent devotion this heart of Lenore made manifest through this overwhelming tribulation! How beyond all conception glorious, how illustrious in all the realm of love's sanctity!

Truly ecstatic was the meeting of these fate-tossed

lovers. Losmega had much recovered, while Lenore, with the elasticity of woman's nature, was as beautiful as ever and fast regaining. But how picture their first rapture? It is like lifting the curtain from seraphic joy. The time of the return could not, of course, be known, and, as usually happens, she came in the moment not expected.

Losmega, following that first announcement, hastens toward the doorway with supernatural strength; but it is opened as he feebly reaches the middle of the room. Lenore, springing from the palanquin, rushes those few steps, shrieking, "O my Losmega! my lover, my lover Losmega! O Losmega! my lover, my lover!" while he cries, "O my beloved! my Lenore! O my Lenore, my beloved, my beloved, my Lenore!" and she fell into his arms, and there was heaven and joy divine.

CHAPTER XI.

THE AWFUL DOOM OF ELANDOS—DEATH BY THE LUGAN AT ON.

THE Fiery Sash rose from that dread faint by a magic motion of the golden wand, half without volition, and followed the hado through the scarlet haze toward the thundering firmament to the right, a little from the white rock portions they had entered, through another similar passage-way of loops with the same impenetrable fluid. They now stood in a moderately sized square chamber whose walls were of livid flame, shaped like the tongues of horrid monsters which breathed a continual menace ; and, as they walked, the flames seemed to roll up for their passing like the surf of waters, and met again in an unbroken sheet of fire. The floor was of stone, rough hewn by some force or beings, leaving it in a ladled surface. This was the simple, yet awful, apartment in which the evil Elandos was to suffer, as his doom, the expiation he so revengefully sought for a saintly woman. When the hado had conducted him to the middle of the place, she turned toward him with a face grave and inspired, and spoke the sentence of Eternal Law :

“Thou absolute and embodied Evil, the flame Wheels of the Universe, of the Fountain of the Seat of Being, have adjudged thee thus, and have decreed thy retribution in this world, and lo ! it is at hand. Had the white flame rays emblazoned thy globe thou shouldst have

found it in the hereafter ; but they did not. And behold ! thy doom has crept around thee."

The hado gave a meaning look toward the farther entrance, and let her staff fall thrice upon the stone floor, when immediately there appeared two spectral beings, strange in form and feature, in bearing unlike the human, unworldly in manner. One carried a silver flowing vessel of medium size, the other something in his right hand of very peculiar appearance. The one with the bowl approached first, and when close it could be seen to be nearly filled with a fluid of deep scarlet color. He came up within a few feet of the Fiery Sash, and stopped at the beckoning of the saga. Then the Zoatian heard the farewell words from human lips :

"Thou wholly Evil," the hado said, "out of thy life the yellow stream of evil has ever flowed ; and evil runneth in a circle, and the stream must into thy life return. The deeds of life take wings, and after the floods of the years are dried up, they fly back. This that thou didst seek for another has, by the laws of inexorable fate, become thy doom ; AND IT HATH IN IT THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE DISTANT, SILENT DEAD. The cup that thou didst hold to another's lips shall now touch thine own. This is the symbol of thy scarlet deeds. Behold !"

With these words the silver cup was given him by the weird being, at the signal from the hado. He drank the ominous draught, and the second attendant was beckoned to give him the strange thing he held. It proved to be the bulbous root from which the potion was made. It was perhaps twelve inches in length, three inches through, and exactly cone-shaped. But the extraordinary features about it were the brilliant hues and textures of its composition. A transverse section,

It began at once the awful work. Silently and secretly the subtle power crept through all the bony substances to reduce and change their nature. No mortal man hath ever known the like of this mixture of fate.

The terrible alterations struck first that intellectual face. Behold! look! the expansive marble brow is losing its globe-like form: it falls into rolls of wrinkled skin; the oval head sinks to a level, and the vibrating brain within throws up the dark hair in beating puffs. Fast the subtle influence works. The eye is changing, the iris is gone, like a rainbow from the sky; and there, nerveless, are the blind, white, rolling coatings in the shapeless hollows. The hair begins to fade: it is drawing up, it is dark, it is brown, it is gray, it is but a streak of light, it is gone, and there is the beating mass. The ears are shrinking, the nose sinks in, the lips draw together; a breath more, and that head, that face, once so proud, intellectual, haughty, swings now and sways from side to side, eyeless, formless, speechless, a half boneless accumulation of gray color, from which the personality has gone forever!

O horrors, it is enough to petrify him that looked upon it! O the quiverings! O the shaking of that metamorphosed mortal! O that writhing, that contortion! O how awful was that vain effort of the human that was just lingering there to force itself up, to bring itself back from its destroyed and annihilated elements, to fashion itself again into being!

What are the fingers now? Dingy, curling tendrils, grasping wildly at the scarlet tissues with their wrecked and disordered functions. Now the bones are softening into nothing; the robes fall from this once royal and stately form, like foliage from a blighted tree; that

which was a head sinks down, down, and just protrudes ; the fingers roll up on the boneless arms like the feelers of insects ; now they are just seen ; now they are drawn into the general mass which the trunk has become, and all that was mortal sinks down upon the stone floor, a formless, inorganic heap, quivering, shaking, contorting with the breath of animal life ; not in the paleness and coldness of an ordinary death, but in the hot and humid agony of an awful change.

But what was most terrible, most shocking to the senses, most destructive to the reason, was the presence of the human in and through and round about that quivering phantom, struggling violently, vainly, back into existence, out of dissolution, into life-likeness. Here was the mortal, choked and stifled out of being by this wonderful metamorphosis. O the sickening feeling that in that strange vitality was all the human still ! not annihilated, but swallowed up and changed. And how it shook the reason to behold right there before the eyes this chaos of human faculties in this hideous form ; to think the soul and mind, which only a few instants before were in that very place enrobed in the glory of full-orbed intellectual life, were absorbed into this suffering, palpitating, and most shocking object ! O terrible thought, that this floating, beating mass upon the rock-hewn floor would never again be lifted up into the human form ! Just what the power was that could so soon, in such startling manner, and in such fearful rapidity destroy and render brutish and snatch out of being all that is mortal, is beyond the power of reason to devise or explain. It must have been the very essence of evil, a thousand times compounded and intensified by the processes of fate, that could thus in moments of time span the countless ages of creation

and the measureless evolutions of nature into organized life, and so transform the temple of the soul into primal matter.

And yet the indefinable horror of this scene cannot be framed into language, for what made one shudder most was that strangest mingling of mind and substance. The intellect and spirit were neither diminished nor annihilated, but seemed to be strained and filtered through every part and particle of that protoplasmic structure, the essence of the mind diluted, and thinned, and sent into myriads of channels; those once dark and brilliant eyes changed into a thousand animal pores; the magnificent perception and acuteness of vision that once made the illumination of that face now disorganized and organless and flowing through countless minute passages; those fiery and high-strung passions now the helpless, quivering twisting of that pantamorphic creation; the pulsations of that wicked heart now the hot and humid throbbing of a formless heap. And thus the mind and soul and senses were driven, beaten back, through the awful series of retrogressions, into that sightless, senseless, voiceless, mindless pile, into that blind un-speaking thing, into the shape without a faculty, into the non-human!

And, O thought incomprehensible! thus in this state to toss to and fro, to beat, to quiver, with all the sensations of the mortal, through the unreeling of the ages, through time that cannot be counted, through cycles that cannot be measured; in that one place to be without further diminution, throbbing, palpitating, conscious, for a very immensity of eternity; then to wither and waste and change, and be transformed into the subtle and menacing flames around those walls!

Such was the fearful expiation, such the awful annihilation, such the doom of the Lugan that the evil Elandos, the Sage of the Crimson Sash, the Fiery Fiend, was made to suffer by the fate of things and the righteousness of eternal law ; for the heartless murder of his bride Zel-lota, for the dreadful cruelty and infernal tortures he imposed upon Lenore, and the terrible destruction which he sought for her, in the mad pursuit of which he himself met his doom at On.

Thus soever, saith the parchment, do the Wheels of the Universe roll unceasingly and with justice through the ages of time and eternity, emblazoning the good in the great red sheets of light like a garment of gold, and eclipsing the evil in the fatal yellow flame.

CHAPTER XII.

HITA'S NOBLE SACRIFICE—THE PALE MESSENGER—THE GARLANDS OF LOVE.

ON the joyous love and bliss of these new-found lovers the dark wing of sorrow began to lie like a pall. The great and splendid purpose of Hita had animated her forces to a deceptive strength, and her nerves to an extremity of tension, which gave way to utter exhaustion in the glad and happy hour when the grand and heroic deed was done. What anguish swept the heart-strings of Lenore and Losmega when they saw the Carmine Bud sinking daily, sinking surely, down the verges of the slow river into the dark valley. A severe nervous fever seized upon her weakened form. They themselves were weak and ill, but the kindness and carefulness of the stranger friends were all that this dire death-malady could require. Alas, alas! all the skill of healing, all the customary resorts to the dark magic, could provoke no slightest respite from the sternness of the eternal summons. The mandate which unwilling mortals never fail to obey had been spoken by the fiat of things to this sublime creature, among the hundreds of the gross world.

The character of Hita was wholly pure and beautiful. Her nature, in itself the best, heightened by contemplation of the good, had been made perfect by noble action.

The vicariousness of suffering is a positive element in human life, as fixed as feelings in the heart, emotions in the soul, thoughts in the mind. So by the sublime motive of love, the noble Hita became a sacrifice in the rescue of her cherished friends.

How glorious a thing it would have been could the devoted Hita have lived and spent her days with the blissful lives of Lenore and Losmega. Why could this not have been her reward, the boon of her terrible suffering, and torture of mind and body? How joyous life would have been, how full of happiness with those two souls, in whom were centred all the ties of the human that she knew.

The last morning came, and the day when she was to bid farewell to those she loved so dearly. All nature was quiet and solemn, as if pausing for the translation. It had all the still loveliness, and grandeur, and radiant beauty, and hushed presence of that ecstatic hour, across the gulf of barbaric torture, across that terrible night of escape, across the shrines of the Blessed Isles, across the shadows of the doomed days after, to the agate shore, when this mute and silent maiden with the loveliness of the morning watched the sleeping of the ocean, she herself the magic beautiful, while the sea's awakened anger bore this jewel upon its bosom! Was this another serenity draped by evil stars? Was this glory of the smiling skies, this splendor of blooming flowers and rapturous breezes, the soft and pathetic breathing of Nature's soul, the gentle ajar of her gates?

Alas, alas, this was the token!

The hour had come for the cruel parting. With lips that spoke but quiveringly and eyes that wept abundantly their sorrow, they took that unwilling, sad farewell. The

dying girl was calm and tranquil, and a serene light shone steadfastly in her eyes. On her lips were joyous smiles, not smiles at the thought of parting, but the radiance of a soul in harmony with itself. Lenore was overcome with grief at this last, most cruel, bereavement.

"O Hita, Hita!" she broke forth in accents of anguish, "thou must not leave me. I cannot let thee go. O how unjust is fate, jealous of these few moments of reunion! And they are snatching thee away from me so soon again, my day-star, my life. O Hita, my sister, my sister! Hita, thou must stay with me. I must cling to thee. Thou canst not go. O Hita!" and she dropped her head in sobs upon the soft bosom of the Carmine Bud, who was every instant fading, fading out of life.

"Blessed Lenore," Hita said, folding her arms around the dear head, "it is hard thus to leave thee; yet weep not, now that I have been permitted to bring thee and thy beloved together again. I can give thanks to the blessed goddesses, and leave thee to happiness and to love. They have answered my prayers, they have granted enough, and I ask not the boon of life. I only ask of Etis and the Blessed Isles, that they will grant long life to thee, Lenore, long life to thee, Losmega, and to ye both, life forever. O bless them, ye Blessed Isles, shield them from all sorrow. O dearest of earth! fare ye well, fare ye well." Then, placing Lenore's hand in that of Losmega, the sublime Hita gave them a last fond look, and then the brave, unselfish spirit took its flight into the immortal vale.

The bereaved lovers in wild and frenzied grief kissed away in vain the chill death, and bending low over the stiff form, forgot the passing hour, and wept the anguish of their broken hearts.

An hour after, they rose from the prostration of grief and laid a garland of roses upon the true heart of their best beloved. On the third day they tenderly laid her away in the Divan cemetery, where the hill-side slopes gently southward, kissed by the rays of the southern sun and the soft breezes of the Mosettan seas.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE "ALBATROSS" SAILS TO ATHENS—WHAT FATE
SAVED LENORE AND PUNISHED ELANDOS?—WHO
MAY TELL?—CONCLUSION.

LENORE and Losmega spent nearly a month after the sad death of Hita in the Divan city, under the tender care of the people, gaining slowly their normal condition of mind and body. At the end of this time they determined to leave the Ubelto, and seek the Zoatian capital, though hard it was to forsake the country that sheltered the dust of the Carmine Bud ; but they felt that they must find a land for which they had some affection. After thirty days' travel through the strange but pleasant region they arrived at the Zoatian city.

They immediately made themselves known at court, and were received with particular favor and kindness.

The returning Zoatian slaves could only indicate the departure and direction the royal Elandos had taken ; and an embassy, made up of some of the officers of state and the king's guard, took them in company and made a journey to On, to ascertain the cause of his disappearance. Complete information concerning the whole matter of thralldom over Lenore and his own death was obtained, and thus the awful doom of the Zoatian king and high-priest became known at the capital. His character being

thus fiendish, his punishment and end were not regretted in Zoatia.

From this circumstance Lenore and Losmega were shown the greatest kindness, and offered every attention by the royal house.

It will be remembered that Lenore was of Grecian lineage, having Attic ancestors on her mother's side, and that she herself showed this noble descent in her well-rounded, exquisite form and divine symmetry. To this ancestral heritage both of them longed to go, now that their own queen city lay in ruins. For that land they sighed where the Ilyssus winds in poetic cadence through olive groves tenderly, like those of Calla ; where the twilight tinges seem like those that glinted Etis ; where the sun's quivering spears fall gently over Hymettus, though it all should remind of the cloak of winter upon the dead mid-summer. To find means of reaching this land of sacred memories was their greatest anxiety. It will also be remembered that in the awful night of destruction and escape by way of the terraces and the vessels on the bay, the Zoatian, by some strange chance, obtained possession of the " Albatross," the beautiful pleasure craft of Losmega, and when out at sea discovered Lenore, and took her with him southward in the far Mosetta. Where was the " Albatross " now ? What a grand thing it would be if this gallant ship, the pleasure boat of their happy young love, and now the only relic of that city of annihilation, could bear them to the shores of their ancient fathers ! It must be still in existence, or perhaps had been disposed of and put to some unhallowed use. Lenore made known their cherished plans and the tender memories of the ship " Albatross." Yes, it was safe, and especially cared for by the officers of

state, and locked in the royal boat-house. The court lent an instant and helping hand, and it was not slow in providing everything necessary for the journey.

After their plans were set in motion, almost their first act was to ask permission to see the "Albatross." This was of course granted, and an officer of state accompanied them. The instant their eyes caught sight of it after this lapse of unhappy time, they both fell down upon its snow-white decks, and wept long and silently, as upon the breast of a living thing.

Two days later the gallant "Albatross," newly rigged and manned, stood at the royal mooring, plumed for its proud flight like the noble bird it symbolized, its gorgeous pennant of gold field, silver crescent, and white-winged emblem tossing merrily in the breeze. At her side, sea-strong and swift, were four majestic ships of the realm, graciously granted to be the courtly escort of Lenore and Losmega across the leagues of sea, the banner of the goshawk streaming gayly from the mizzen-mast.

The morning opened with great beauty and serenity, like a benediction upon the departure of the lovers. The thousand voices of nature broke forth in wonderful loveliness like the symphony of life in June mornings. It was in such an hour as this that Losmega's noble ship took her place of honor between the Zoatian triremes, while the lovers paid a silent farewell to this land of pathetic memory, which held in its embrace the remains of the beloved Hita.

During the long sail no harsh storm occurred. At last fair winds, soft as the breath of ocean naiads, swept gently across the harp-like waters of the Great Sea, with a gracious welcome for the lovers to the land of

sacred song and heroic melody, while Attic olive groves stretched out their emerald fingers in glad greeting. A little afterward, the wooing breezes of the Piræus ruffled the surface of the blue ÆGEAN into delicate plaitings, as the prow of the "Albatross" made the sweet sounding play of the waters.

With joyful hearts they saw their beloved vessel moored side by side with her splendid consorts in this harbor of unrivalled renown, which the bard of Ilion oft visited in his wanderings, and where the divine Sappho knelt to tune her reeds by the sea.

Three days the royal escort roamed the matchless Attica with Lenore and Losmega, viewing the most exquisite spot of the world's history, then weighed anchor, and sailed for their own land. With a deep and tender friendship they took leave of the lovers, while the commander, the gracious representative of the court, presented them with a sack of gold.

This generous gift enabled them to purchase a villa in a beautiful grove of acacia and olive, and in this home, clustered about with fable and tradition, they lived and loved. The soft winds of evening, coming tuned from the Helicon, played ever around the porticos and doorways, blending with the rapturous charm of the rose hues of twilight, or breathing gently while the morning sun shed his volumes of mild and silver light. Through the change and processes of the seasons the form of day was clad in the delicious blue mantle of the skies, while sometimes, here and there, the air was snowed with drifts of wool cloud, yet warm and soft as flushing noon. The soft moonbeams peopled the grove with fairy inhabitants, and the tall trees threw out their long shadows, while down through the laced

boughs the opal lights of night shone still and beneficent.

After they were fairly settled in their home they began the task of tracing the ancient lineage of Lenore, and of discovering whether all of her ancestral line were dead. Through their historic search they seemed to be favored at every turn, and it was found that the last of the race had died at a great age, and that during the death sickness a message was sent by herald to Lenore five days before the awful destruction of Petoséga, and so never reached the fated city. Two days after the messenger departed the relative died, leaving a dowry and an immense estate to Lenore, in the custody of the Attic courts.

Grateful and thrice grateful at this unexpected fortune were they, which they received after little delay of identity. Besides the pleasures of life it opened to them, they were enabled to accomplish two things. One was to visit the Zoatian shores once more, and the Diva, on the Ubelto, and tenderly transfer the sacred remains of Hita to the loved city of Pallas, and there, in the beautiful grove upon the southern side, where the heart of nature is warmest, they laid her away forever. Here they reared a tomb of Parian marble, surmounted by a winged figure of Love holding in outstretched hands garlands of roses. This beautiful memorial could be seen ages after the builders themselves had yielded to the advances of time. The other was to erect a temple to Etis and the goddesses of the Blessed Isles. Both of these magnificent structures were objects of veneration by that nation of lovers of art and beauty. Daily they worshipped at the shrine; daily they twined garlands for the loved and silent form in the tomb; and thus each